Cameroon – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 13 May 2013

Information on police corruption in Cameroon?

A press release from the *Cameroon Center for Democracy and Human Rights* comments on the prevalence of corruption in Cameroon as follows:

> "Corruption has eaten so deep into the fabric of the Cameroonian society such that it dictates almost every aspect of life. Misappropriate of public funds run across all state structures and public officials, including the President and his Ministers, the leadership of the National Assembly, and Directors of public corporations. In the same light, bribery has become the order of the day and virtually directs daily activities for civil servants and law enforcement officials who continue to engage in corrupt practices with impunity. The Government's unwillingness to truly hold corrupt officials accountable for their actions is responsible for the institutionalization of corruption as a norm in Cameroon. Today, it is extremely difficult for anyone of a morally upright character to live and effectively function in the Cameroonian society." (Cameroon Center for Democracy and Human Rights (25 June 2009) *Government Endorses Corruption by Arbitrarily Sentencing Anti-Corruption and Civil Society Activists in Cameroon*)

A country profile of Cameroon published on the *Business Anti-corruption Portal* website, in a section titled "Police" (paragraph headed "Individual Corruption"), states:

> "The Cameroonian police are perceived to be the most corrupt public institution in the country, with a large percentage of the surveyed households who had contact with the police in 2009 reporting to have paid a bribe, as illustrated in Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer 2010. The US Department of State 2011 lists a few examples of how corruption takes place between the police and citizens; individuals reportedly pay bribes to the police to secure their freedom or to pass through police checkpoints, and influential people reportedly bribe the police to arrest or harass individuals involved in their personal disputes. The US Department of State 2011 further cites a 2010 report by The Ministry of Justice on Human Rights in Cameroon, which states that 296 police officers were sanctioned or tried in 2010 for wrongdoing, such as extortion. According to Global Integrity 2008, it is customary for drivers to pay between USD 1 and USD 2 in bribes at checkpoints." (Business Anti-corruption Portal (august 2012) *Cameroon Country Profile*)

In a paragraph headed "Business Corruption" this section of the document also states:

> "According to Transparency International National Integrity Study - Cameroon 2007, bribery and the demand of facilitation payments to deliver services are frequently practiced by the Cameroonian police. The road control police often ask drivers for a 'road tax' to exempt them from control of documents. Moreover, cronyism, nepotism, favouritism, and tribalism are very common in the delivery of police services. Given this environment, companies surveyed in the World Economic Forum Global

Competitiveness Report 2011-2012 identify the reliability of Cameroonian police services to protect them from crime as unreliable." (ibid)

See also paragraph headed "Political Corruption" which states:

"According to the US Department of State 2010, there were sanctioned cases against the police during 2010. For example, in January, police inspector Eric Essama was suspended without pay for three months due to his involvement in extortion and indiscipline. In May, a second grade police officer Zara Mahamat was suspended for three months without pay for embezzlement of public funds and breach of trust. Global Integrity 2008 reports that punishment of corrupt police officers has been lenient compared to the wave of long term imprisonment of politicians and high-ranking government officials that started in 2006." (ibid)

A paragraph headed Frequency states:

"World Economic Forum: The Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012:- Business executives give the reliability of the police services to enforce law and order a score of 3.7 on a 7-point scale (1 being 'cannot be relied upon at all' and 7 'can always be relied upon'). Transparency International: Global Corruption Barometer 2010:- Citizens give the police a score of 4.5 on a 5-point scale (1 being 'not at all corrupt' and 5 'extremely corrupt'). This makes the police the most corrupt institution in the country. - 63.9% of the respondents who had contact with the police in 2009 report to have paid a bribe." (ibid)

The 2013 *United States Department of State* country report on Cameroon, in a section titled "Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government" (Section 4), states:

"Police were corrupt. Individuals reportedly paid bribes to police and the judiciary to secure their freedom. Police demanded bribes at checkpoints, and influential citizens reportedly paid police to make arrests or abuse individuals involved in personal disputes." (United States Department of State (19 April 2013) *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012 – Cameroon*, p.23)

A section of this report titled "Arrest Procedures and Treatment While in Detention" (paragraph headed "Arbitrary Arrest") states:

"Although the law provides for judicial review of an arrest within 24 hours, the courts did not convene on weekends, so individuals arrested on a Friday typically remained in detention until at least Monday. According to some reports, police and gendarmes occasionally made such 'Friday arrests' on spurious charges after accepting bribes from persons who had private grievances, although the number of such cases decreased during the year, according to NGOs and legal practitioners." (ibid, p.9)

See also section titled "Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life" which states:

"On May 24, five police officers from the immigration police office in Yaounde beat and killed Aboubacar Zaba, a tradesman from Niger, in the Yaounde neighborhood of Mokolo-Elobi, when Zaba refused to bribe them. The Yaounde judicial police were investigating the case at year's end." (ibid, p.2)

An *Amnesty International* report, in a section titled "Extrajudicial executions and excessive use of lethal force", states:

> "In July 2003 Cameroonian human rights organizations and independent newspapers reported that police used excessive and lethal force to break up a demonstration by motorcycle riders in Douala. They shot dead five people and wounded more than 30 others. The demonstrators were protesting against police corruption and extortion, and the beating to death by police of a motorcycle taxi rider who reportedly failed to stop at a roadblock. No action is known to have been taken against the police responsible for using lethal force and causing deaths during the protest, or those responsible for the death of the motorcycle taxi rider." (Amnesty International (29 January 2009) *Cameroon: Impunity underpins persistent abuse*, p.35)

An *International Crisis Group* report, in a section titled "Indiscipline And Crime", states:

> "The various branches of the security forces are affected by this criminalisation. An increasing number of officers have been suspended for corruption, trafficking, influence peddling and embezzlement, although seemingly to little effect. In May 2008, the head of the border police was dismissed for corruption in passport and visa delivery. In November 2008, two policemen were dismissed and charged with cooperating with a foreign intelligence service for accepting money to kidnap a refugee political opponent from Equatorial Guinea and deliver him to the country's embassy in Yaoundé. Even more serious is the fact that police officers are known to rent out their weapons at night to criminals or participate directly in robbery. In 2007 a police officer was suspended for armed assault. In late 2008, a policeman was arrested after robbing a private home in Yaoundé. In the country's forest reserves, some gendarmes rent their weapons to smugglers of protected species." (International Crisis Group (24 June 2010) *Cameroon: The Dangers of a Fracturing Regime*, p.10)

A Human Rights Watch report on the extortion of gay people in Cameroon, in a section titled "Corruption and Extortion Rackets", states:

> "People accused of homosexuality pay exorbitant sums of money to both law enforcement agents and private profiteers to avoid arrest on homosexuality charges, or to secure their release once arrested. In August and September 2011, on at least three occasions, a Yaoundé scam artist posed as a gay man on social networking sites in order to make dates with gay men, and then turned them in to the authorities. In two cases, the victims were forced to pay bribes, which were shared between the security forces and the scam artist. CAMFAIDS collected complaints from various individuals who were victims of the same scam artist; they found he was working with security agents, including gendarmes based at the Nlongkak, Etoudi, and Melen Brigades, and police at the commissariat of the 10th arrondissement in Bastos." (Human Rights Watch (21 March 2013) *Guilty By Association: Human Rights Violations in the Enforcement of Cameroon's Anti-Homosexuality Law*, pp.37-38)

In a section titled "Corruption" this report states:

> "Several individuals wound up being prosecuted for homosexuality because they were unable to pay sizable bribes demanded by gendarmes or police. In one case, several arrested men spent over a week in custody at a gendarmerie brigade in Yaoundé.

According to one of them, their family members came to 'negotiate' their release with the commandant, bringing a total of 450,000 CFA (about $900). They were about to be released when the captain—the commandant's supervisor—became aware of the transaction and gave orders not to release the men. Another man held in the same case, interviewed separately, explained, 'The investigators asked us for money, 500,000 CFA ($1000). The commandant of the brigade asked us for this. He said if we didn't pay we'd be taken to the Parquet.' Those who paid bribes, such as Joseph P. in Limbe, whose friends paid 70,000 CFA to gendarmes were often released." (ibid, pp.47-48)

See also Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada response to a request for information which, in a section titled "Treatment by Society and Government Authorities", states:

"The founder of the Association for the Defence of Homosexuals (ADEFHO) in Cameroon, who is a defence lawyer for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, was quoted in an Inter Press Service (IPS) article as saying that although the criminal procedural code allows prosecutors to arraign homosexuals only if they are caught engaging in sex, homosexuals are frequently subjected to illegal arrest merely for being suspected of being gay; suspected homosexuals are also at risk for extortion by police. The Director of Alternatives-Cameroun corroborates the latter allegations, saying that 'police officers have been reported repeatedly as perpetrators of financial harassment of gay night clubs, extortion and even sexual abuse of the clients of those clubs'." (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (30 March 2010) *CMR103372.E – Cameroon: Situation of homosexuals, including legislation, and availability of state protection and support services (January 2008 - March 2010)*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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