

CAMEROON ASSESSMENT

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Country Information and Policy Unit

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I SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

1.1 This assessment has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a variety of sources.

1.2 The assessment has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to catalogue all human rights violations. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum claims made in the United Kingdom.

1.3 The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain.

1.4 It is intended to revise the assessment on a 6-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom.

1.5 This country assessment has been placed on the Internet in the Home Office website: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>. An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to:

Amnesty International UK

Immigration Advisory Service

Immigration Appellate Authority

Immigration Law Practitioners' Association

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

JUSTICE

Medical Foundation for the care of Victims of Torture

Refugee Council

Refugee Legal Centre

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

II GEOGRAPHY

2.1 Lying on the west coast of Africa, the Republic of Cameroon is bordered by Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. It covers an area of 475,442 sq kms (183,569 sq miles) and has a 200 km coastline. [1][2]

2.2 The population of Cameroon was officially estimated to be 14,859,000 in mid-1999, giving an average density of 31.3 inhabitants per square kilometre. Population growth has been rapid and the composition and distribution are extremely diverse. The distribution of population is uneven, with concentrations in the west, the south central region and the Sudan savannah zone of the north. The majority of the population is rural. [2]

2.3 There are over 200 tribes and many local languages spoken although the official languages are French and English. The major groups are the Fang, Bamileke, Duala and Fulani and other smaller groups. Pygmies, locally known as Baguilli and Babinga, live in the southern forests. Cameroon is divided into ten provinces - Central, Littoral, West, South West, North West, North, East, South, Adamaoua and Far North. The anglophone provinces - the North West and South West - has just over one fifth of the population of the eight francophone provinces. The contrasting influences of British and French rule remain evident in education, commerce, law and elsewhere, although unification of the civil services in 1972, official bilingualism and the integration of transport networks and economies have helped to reduce the disparities between the two zones. [1][2]

III HISTORY

Recent Political History

3.1 The German protectorate of Kamerun, of which the Republic of Cameroon was formerly a part, was established in 1884. In 1916, the German administration was overthrown by combined French, British and Belgian military operations during the First World War and in 1919 the territory was divided into British and French spheres of influence. In 1922, both zones became subject to mandates of the League of Nations, which allocated four-fifths of the territory to French administration as French Cameroun. The other one-fifth was allocated to British administration as the Northern and Southern Cameroons. [1][2]

3.2 In 1946, the mandates were converted into UN trust territories but were still under their respective French and British administrations. In 1957, French Cameroun became an autonomous state and in January 1960, following both domestic and international pressure for independence from France, the Republic of Cameroon was formed. Ahmadou Ahidjo was elected as its first president. [1][2]

3.3 Around the same time in the British Cameroons, pressure was growing for a break from

Nigeria to which it had been attached for administrative purposes. In 1961, the Southern Cameroons' electorate voted in favour of union with the Republic of Cameroon, whilst the Northern Cameroon electorate voted to merge with Nigeria. Ahmadou Ahidjo assumed the presidency of the new Federal Republic of Cameroon with John Foncha as his vice-president. [1][2]

3.4 In May 1972, a new Constitution was endorsed and in June of the same year the country was re-named the United Republic of Cameroon. With a view to reducing its dependency on France, the Union Nationale Camerounaise (UNC), (formed by the merger of six political parties, including the Kamerun National Democratic Party and the Union Camerounaise), assumed responsibility for Cameroon's political and social affairs. [1][2]

3.5 In April 1975, Ahidjo was re-elected as president with Paul Biya as Prime Minister and despite some dissatisfaction with the single party system and with the low representation of English-speaking politicians in the government, the electorate approved the UNC chosen candidates for the National Assembly in May 1978. [1][2]

3.6 Ahidjo resigned in November 1982 and presidential power was transferred to Paul Biya, who appointed Bello Bouba Maigari as prime minister. In August 1983 Biya announced that an attempt to overthrow the government had failed. Two of Ahidjo's advisers were arrested and Maigari and the minister for the armed forces were dismissed. Later that month Ahidjo resigned the chairmanship of the UNC and later left the country and remained in exile in France and Senegal until his death in November 1989. Biya was elected chairman of the UNC and in January 1984 he was re-elected as president. [1][2]

3.7 In February 1984, in his absence, Ahidjo and his two advisers were tried for their part in the 1983 attempted coup. They all received death sentences which were later commuted to life imprisonment. [1][2]

3.8 A further attempt to overthrow the government was made in April 1984 by members of the Republican Guard. Those involved were subsequently tried by a military court and 46 of the defendants were executed. [1][2]

3.9 Following the destabilising effects of these coups some members of the government were removed from office, and twelve members of the political bureau of the UNC central committee were dismissed. [1][2]

3.10 In March 1985, the UNC was renamed the Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC) - Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM). Legislative and presidential elections were held in 1988. All the candidates for the National Assembly were RDPC approved and Biya was the sole candidate for the presidency. [1][2]

3.11 On 5 December 1990, following increasing civil unrest, the National Assembly approved an amendment to the Constitution which provided for a multi-party system. Continuing reluctance by President Biya and the government to hold a conference to formulate a timetable for multi-party elections led to demonstrations and strikes in 1991, organised by the National Co-ordination Committee of Opposition Parties (NCCOP). This resulted in the temporary detention of several opposition leaders. [1][2]

3.12 In October 1991, Biya announced that legislative elections would take place in February 1992. These were later re-scheduled to 1 March 1992 but a number of parties, including the

Social Democratic Front (SDF), refused to take part, claiming the elections were too early. The RDP won 88 of the 180 seats contested and secured an absolute majority by forming an alliance with the Mouvement pour la Défense de la République (MDR). Presidential elections were subsequently held on 11 October 1992 and Biya was re-elected with 39.9% of the votes. John Fru Ndi, the leader of the SDF, and Bello Bouba Maigari, the leader of the UNDP, secured 35.9% and 19.2% of the votes respectively. John Fru Ndi disputed the official results, claiming that he had won. Demonstrations were staged by the opposition supporters, but the Supreme Court ruled against Fru Ndi's appeal that the results should be declared invalid. The unrest continued and Fru Ndi was placed under house arrest. [1][2]

3.13 In 1993, an alliance of opposition parties organised a campaign of demonstrations and demanded that a new presidential election take place. Although the alliance was accused of inciting civil unrest the government announced that a debate on constitutional reform would take place. Draft constitutional amendments were announced in May 1993 but the debate on constitutional reform was suspended in November 1993 when teachers took strike action following a reduction in the salaries of public sector workers. Other public sector workers joined the strike in early 1994. In response, the government dismissed some teachers and suspended the salaries of others. Students were also demonstrating at this time in support of their demands for better conditions. [1][2]

3.14 Cameroon was admitted to the Commonwealth in November 1995 despite some concerns that little progress had been made on either human rights issues or the democratic process. [1]

3.15 On 18 January 1996, the president promulgated amendments to the Constitution, including limits to the presidential term, from five years renewable without limit to seven years renewable once. [1][2]

3.16 Municipal elections took place on 21 January 1996 and legislative and presidential elections were held on 17 May 1997 and 12 October 1997 respectively. [2]

The Economy

3.17 The country's population of approximately 15 million had a recorded mean capital Gross National Product (GNP) of approximately US \$607. Over the past three years, GNP growth has averaged 4 to 5 per cent annually. Agriculture accounts for 25% of annual gross domestic product (GDP), with industry and the services sector representing 22% and 35% respectively. Cameroon is an oil producer and its principal exports include timber, coffee, cocoa, cotton, bananas and rubber, although the government has banned the export of raw timber since January 1999, in line with commitments given to the Rio Earth Summit goals. Following the decline in the price of petroleum and other commodities in the mid-1980s the economy was in crisis for several years. In an effort to rectify the situation a series of austerity measures was introduced and a programme of economic restructuring was undertaken. This included the reduction in the salaries of public sector workers which in turn provoked a series of strikes. The CFA franc was devalued in 1994 since when the economic performance has improved, with GDP growth averaging more than 5% between 1996 and 1997. The CFA franc has been given a fixed parity against the euro, at 655.957 per euro. Cameroon is part of the Central African Economic and Monetary Committee. [2][5][6][9]

3.18 Cameroon's infrastructure is not fully developed but permits limited access to all ten provinces. Cameroon's main industrial and commercial port city, Douala, is linked to major cities

in the seven southern provinces by good roads. It is also linked by rail to Yaounde, the capital and second major city and to Ngaoundere in the north. In terms of economic potential, Douala is the major entry point for imports not only to Cameroon but also to the entire central African region including the Central African Republic, Chad and Equatorial Guinea. Douala Port handles about 95 percent of the total maritime traffic of Cameroon and more than 90 percent of the country's external trade. Distribution to northern provinces is mainly through the railhead at Ngaoundere where regional warehouses stock goods for onward road delivery to other northern cities and Chad bound for the Central African Republic. Three international airports at Douala, Yaounde and Garoua have facilities for air freight. [9]

3.19 Utility and telephone services are available in the two largest cities, Yaounde and Douala but they are not always reliable due to poor maintenance and mismanagement. Outside of Yaounde and Douala few Cameroonians have access to telephone services and it is difficult to reach many towns and cities due to unreliable non-mobile telecommunications networks. [9]

3.20 Cameroon's economic reform programme has engendered opposition within the ruling party. The reform programme includes budget stringency, a reduction of civil servants and the privatisation of many public enterprises. Widespread corruption and an inefficient judicial system hamper the development of Cameroon's economy and society. [9]

3.21 The Government and Christian missions maintain hospitals and medical centres. In the early 1990s there were 3 central hospitals in Cameroon, 73 general hospitals, 46 private hospitals and 792 health centres. There were also 49 maternal and child health centres and 11 centres for the treatment of leprosy. At that time, Cameroon had 28,000 hospital beds, 618 physicians and 135 pharmacists. Expenditure on health by the government in 1996/97 was an estimated 30,100m francs CFA (3.8% of total spending). [1]

3.22 The World Bank has loaned Cameroon US \$50 million to meet the medical care of 35,000 people confirmed to be living with HIV/AIDS. The loan is repayable in 10 years after a 10-year grace period. The state and local communities are expected to raise an additional US \$10 million to combat the pandemic. The money will be used to bolster the national aids control strategy by supporting local activities in the health sector. Priority will be given to epidemiological and attitudinal surveillance, prevention through the treatment of sexually transmitted infections, advice and voluntary screening. The money will also be used in the prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission, the promotion of safe-blood transfusion, care and treatment of HIV-positive people, training and promoting the role of traditional healers and midwives in combating the disease. [22]

IV INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE

The Political System

4.1 Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency which has held presidential, municipal and legislative elections in the last five years. Since independence in 1960, a single party, now called the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), has remained in power and limited political choice. [6]

4.2 Municipal elections took place on 21 January 1996 and were judged by international observers to be generally free and fair. The RDPC retained approximately 55% of the local government areas. Opposition parties, including the SDF and the UNDP, made important gains, notably in major towns. In many areas this was followed by the immediate appointment of

government delegates who were given overall control of municipal councils. [2]

4.3 Legislative elections were held on 17 May 1997. International and Commonwealth observers found the electoral process to be flawed. In particular, the Commonwealth Observer Group noted irregularities in voter registration and the distribution of polling cards to those presumed to be opposition supporters. The Commonwealth Observer Group also recommended the establishment of an impartial and autonomous institution such as an independent electoral commission. [7]

4.4 On 6 June 1997, the Supreme Court announced that the ruling RDPC had obtained 109 seats, with the SDP and UNDP winning 43 seats and 13 seats respectively. The opposition parties called for the elections to be annulled because of irregularities and fraud. The Supreme Court, however, annulled elections in seven constituencies only. Some known opposition leaders who demonstrated outside the Supreme Court were detained and charged with inciting revolt. They were released a week later and all charges were dropped. Candidates of the RDPC gained the seats in a re-run of the elections in the seven constituencies held on 3 August 1997. [2][5]

4.5 Presidential elections took place on 12 October 1997 and were contested by the incumbent, Biya, and six other candidates. The main opposition parties, the SDF, UNDP and UDC, refused to participate, having failed to secure a postponement of the elections and the creation of an independent national electoral commission. They further called for an "active boycott" of the presidential poll. Despite the threat of disruption from the main opposition parties, the elections passed off peacefully. [9][10][11][12]

4.6 The turnout figures for voting in the presidential elections were disputed and there were allegations of vote rigging. The Supreme Court rejected four petitions submitted by three political parties requesting total or partial cancellation of the elections. [5][13]

4.7 The official result of the presidential poll gave Biya a landslide victory with 92.6% of the vote. He was sworn in for a further presidential term at a ceremony in November 1997 which was boycotted by opposition parties. [1][14]

4.8 President Biya established a "Government of National Unity". The Government, which was formed in January 1998, is a coalition of the RDPC, UNDP, the Union des Populations (UPC) and the Nouvelle Convention (NC). All but five members of the cabinet belong to the RDPC. The UNDP leader, Bello Bouba Maigari, was appointed a minister of state and two other UNDP members were appointed to the cabinet. The runner-up in the presidential election, Henri Hogbe Nlend (UPC), also accepted a ministerial post, as did Antar Gassagaye (NC). [1]

4.9 In 1998, the SDF engaged in talks with the RDPC but it declined the invitation to join the Government because the two sides remained divided over opposition calls for revised electoral laws and an independent electoral commission. Some influential members of the SDF's National Executive Committee have reportedly challenged Mr Fru Ndi's decision to discontinue talks with the RDPC. [15][16][17][18]

4.10 President Biya's control over the country's administrative apparatus is broad and deep. The President appoints all Ministers, including the Prime Minister and all the governors of the 10 provinces. The President also has the power to appoint important lower level members of the 58 provincial administrative structures, including the senior divisional officers, the divisional officers and the divisional chiefs. [6]

4.11 The 1996 amendments to the 1972 Constitution retained a strongly centralised system of power based on presidential authority. The amendments imposed a limit of two seven-year terms on the President. The amendments provided for the creation of a partially elected and partially appointed senate along with the creation of a similarly constituted set of provincial assemblies with limited power over local affairs. The senate and regional council amendments have not yet been implemented. [6]

4.12 In December 2000, the Government introduced a Bill to establish a National Elections Observatory (NEO), in response to calls from opposition political parties for the creation of an independent electoral commission. The Bill was signed into law on 19 December. The eleven members of the NEO will be appointed by the President. A committee has been given the responsibility of setting up the NEO. [24][28]

4.13 On 8 December 2000, a presidential decree postponed municipal elections that were to be held on 21 January 2001 until 21 January 2002. This effectively extends the mandate of Cameroon's 240 municipal councils that were elected on 21 January 1996 for a year. One of the reasons for this postponement were that the municipal elections were to be held at the same time as the 21st Franco-African Summit. The other reasons were that a Bill to set up a National Elections Observatory and a Bill on state funding of political parties and electoral campaigns had to become law before the municipal elections could take place as the provisions of these Bills would have a direct bearing on the elections. [27]

The Security Forces

4.14 Internal security responsibilities are shared by the national police (DGSN), the National Intelligence Service (DGRE), the gendarmerie, the Ministry of Territorial Administration, military intelligence, the army, and to a lesser extent, the Presidential Guard. In February 2000, the Government created a military Operational Command to fight crime in Douala and the Littoral Province. The police and gendarmerie have dominant roles in enforcing internal security laws. The security forces, including the military forces, are under the control of the President, the civilian Minister of Defence and the civilian head of police. [5][6]

4.15 There is no compulsory military service in Cameroon and recruitment into the armed forces is on a voluntary basis. [19]

The Judiciary

4.16 The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary but in practice the judiciary is subject to political influence and corruption. The legal system comprises the High Court of Justice, the Supreme Court, a court of appeal in each province and a court of first instance in each of the country's 58 divisions. The court system remains technically part of the executive branch and is subordinate to the Ministry of Justice. The Constitution specifies that the President is the guarantor of the legal system's independence. He also appoints judges with the advice of the Supreme Council of the Magistrature. [5][6]

4.17 The legal system includes both national law and customary law and many cases can be tried using either. Customary law is based upon the traditions of the ethnic group predominant in the region and is adjudicated by traditional authorities of that group. Accordingly, particular points of customary law differ depending upon the region and the ethnic group where a case is being tried. Customary courts may exercise jurisdiction only with the consent of both parties to a case; either party has the right to have any case heard by a national rather than a customary court and

customary law is supposed to be valid only when it is not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience. Many citizens, however, are unaware of their rights under civil law and have been taught since birth that customary laws form the rules by which they must abide. Consequently, traditional courts remain important in rural areas and serve as an alternative for settling disputes. Their authority varies by region and ethnic group but they are often the arbiters of property and domestic disputes. [6]

4.18 Military tribunals may exercise jurisdiction over civilians not only when the president declares martial law but also in cases involving civil unrest or organised armed violence. A law on the organisation of the judiciary promulgated in 1998 also transferred to military tribunals jurisdiction over gang crimes, grand banditry and highway robbery. The Government apparently interprets these guidelines quite broadly and sometimes uses military courts to try matters concerning dissident groups and political opponents. [6]

4.19 Corruption and inefficiency in the courts remain serious problems. Justice is frequently delayed or denied before reaching the trial stage. At trial, political bias often brings trials to a halt or results in an extremely long process, punctuated by extended court recesses. Powerful political or business interests appear to enjoy virtual immunity from prosecution; some politically sensitive cases are settled with a payoff and thus are never heard. Private journalists, political opponents and critics of the Government often are charged or held and sometimes jailed under libel statutes considered by observers as unduly restrictive of press freedom. [6]

4.20 The legal structure is strongly influenced by the French legal system, although in the anglophone provinces certain aspects of the Anglo-Saxon tradition apply. The Constitution provides for a fair public hearing in which the defendant is presumed innocent. The Bar Association and some voluntary organisations such as the Cameroonian Association of Female Jurists, offer free assistance in some cases. Trials are normally public, except in cases with political overtones judged disruptive of social peace. [6]

V HUMAN RIGHTS: GENERAL SITUATION

5.1 The Government's human rights record is generally poor and government officials have committed numerous serious abuses. Citizens' ability to change their government is limited. Security forces reportedly commit extrajudicial killings, torture, beatings and abuse detainees and prisoners, generally with impunity. [5][6][26][29][35]

5.2 The preamble of the constitution provides for the inviolability of the home, for the protection against search except by virtue of law and for the privacy of all correspondence. These rights, however, are subject to the higher interests of the state. Police and gendarmes reportedly harass citizens, conduct searches without warrants and open or seize mail. The security forces keep some opposition activists and dissidents under surveillance. [6]

5.3 The constitution also states that "no person may be prosecuted, arrested or detained except in the cases and according to the manner determined by law" and that "the law shall ensure the right of every person to a fair trial". Despite this, and the requirement of the Penal Code that detainees be brought before a magistrate promptly, arbitrary prolonged detention is still a problem. [5][26][29]

5.4 A person may be detained in custody for a maximum of 72 hours before referral to a judicial authority to be charged or released, however, this limit is often exceeded. Legislation also allows administrative detention without charge for renewable periods of 15 days, ostensibly to combat

banditry and maintain public order. It has reportedly been used in some cases to detain critics and opponents of the Government. [5]

5.5 The courts have punished some instances of arbitrary detention, notably the sentencing of six policemen (four in absentia) who had arrested, detained and beaten a deputy magistrate in 1994, to long custodial sentences and heavy fines. [5]

5.6 Security forces continue to use excessive force and commit extrajudicial killings. The authorities do not, however, condone such abuse of power and recent cases of such killings have been subject to official investigation. At the end of 1997, two cases were under investigation following the deaths of two detainees in Yaoundé prison in 1997. In one, a police commissioner and three colleagues were arrested pending trial. [5][6][8][30]

5.7 There have been reports that the Douala Operational Command has committed numerous summary executions and tortures prisoners. This special military unit, created to fight crime in Douala and the Littoral Province, operates above the authority of other security forces currently in the city. This command killed some suspects in shoot-outs and high-speed car chases during 2000. It also reportedly uses a network of informants, including a large number of convicted criminals and prison officials, to obtain the names of suspected bandits who they then arrested and summarily executed. The Operational Command also uses neighbourhood sweeps to search for criminals, occasionally executing suspects for minor offences. A human rights group called Christian Action for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT) blamed the Operational Command for the extrajudicial killings of around 50 people between May and July 2000 in Douala. [6][21]

5.8 Credible reports by the press and the Movement for the Defence of Human Rights and Liberties (human rights organisation operating in the Far North Province), describe a large but undetermined number of extrajudicial killings perpetrated by a special anti-gang gendarmerie unit tasked with combating highwaymen. This unit was created under direct authority of the Minister of Defence and operates outside the normal chain of command for law enforcement units. [6]

VI HUMAN RIGHTS: SPECIFIC ISSUES AND SPECIFIC GROUPS

Freedom of Assembly and Association

6.1 The law provides for freedom of assembly but the Government sometimes restricts this right in practice. The Penal Code requires organisers of public meetings, demonstrations or processions to notify government officials in advance but does not require prior government approval of public assemblies. Government officials have asserted that this provision of the Penal Code allows them to grant or deny permission to public assemblies. Public assemblies have been broken up by security forces whose organisers have submitted advance notice as required by law but for which government authorities did not issue permits. The Government allows greater freedom of assembly during non-election years than during election years. [6]

6.2 The law provides for freedom of association and the Government generally respects this right in practice. Cameroon had been a one-party state up until 1990. In 1990, however, following continued pressure and civil unrest, President Biya announced the intention to adopt a multi-party system, a reform in laws governing subversion and a reform of legislation which prohibited political association. In December 1990, the National Assembly approved a constitutional amendment which provided for the establishment of a multi-party system. The amendments required the government to grant or refuse registration within three months to any political

organisation seeking recognition. In addition, recognised parties would receive support from the state during election campaigns. The financing of political parties from external sources was, however, prohibited as was the recruitment of party activists on a regional or ethnic basis. The conditions for government recognition of political parties, a prerequisite for many political activities, are not onerous. Over 150 political parties operate legally together with a large and growing number of civic associations. [2][5][6]

6.3 In November 2000, police in Yaounde blocked a march led by opposition politicians calling for the creation of an independent electoral commission. The march had been formally banned. The security forces intervened shortly after the 43 members of the Social Democratic Front left the National Assembly for the Presidential Palace. The opposition leaders wanted to present President Biya with a proposed bill calling for a new electoral commission. [23]

Freedom of Speech and the Media

6.4 The constitution provides for freedom of expression and of the press but the Government continues to impose limits on these rights. The Penal Code's libel laws specify that defamation, abuse, contempt and dissemination of false news are offences punishable by prison terms and heavy fines. These statutes sometimes are invoked by the Government to silence criticism of the Government and government officials. The security forces frequently restrict press freedom by harassing or abusing private print media journalists. [6]

6.5 In 1996, the Government repealed the law that had authorised the Government both to censor private publications and extra-judicially to seize publications that are considered to be dangerous to public order or suspend newspapers' publication licences. Since 1997, formal censorship has ceased. Of the approximately 60 private newspapers that are published, only about 20 are published on a regular basis. Most are highly critical of President Biya and the Government and report on controversial issues such as corruption and human rights abuses. Some journalists are more cautious in what they publish and practice self-censorship. [6][31][32]

6.6 Despite the larger number of newspapers in the country, the influence of the print media on the average person is minimal. Circulation is low, distribution is problematic outside of Yaounde and Douala and prices are high. Print media reaches only a small percentage of the population, most notably the urban elite. [6]

6.7 Radio remains the most important medium for reaching most citizens. There are approximately 2,000,000 radio sets in the country. Television broadcasts are of less importance than radio broadcasts but are more influential than print media. There are an estimated 300,000 to 400,000 television sets in the country. [6]

6.8 In 1990 and again in 1995, laws were enacted that provided for the licensing of private radio and television stations but these regulations were not implemented in either of those years. A Government decree was passed on 3 April 2000 finally implementing the 1990 law on broadcasting allowing private companies to apply for a five-year radio or ten-year television licence. The decree states that programmes should reflect the plurality of Cameroonian society. Programmes must not be pornographic, exploit children or morally corrupt them and should not incite violence. [6][37]

6.9 The state-owned Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) broadcasts on both television and radio and is currently the only officially recognised and fully licensed broadcaster in the country. The Government levies taxes on all registered taxpayers to finance CRTV programming. [6]

Freedom of Religion

6.10 The constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice. In general, the Religious Congregations Law governs relations between the Government and religious groups. Religious groups have to be approved and registered with the Ministry of Territorial Administration in order to function legally. There have been no reports that the Government has refused to register any religious group. Although it is illegal for a religious group to operate without official recognition, the law prescribes no specific penalties for doing so. [3][4]

6.11 In order to register, a religious group has to submit a file to the Minister of Territorial Administration. The file must include a request for authorisation, a copy of the charter of the group which describes planned activities and the names and respective functions of the officials of the group. The Minister studies the file and sends it to the president with his recommendation which is generally accepted by the president. If the application is approved, the president formally recognises the religious group. The approval process usually takes several years due mainly to administrative delays. The Government does not register traditional religious groups on the grounds that the practice of traditional religions is not public but rather private to members of a particular ethnic or kinship group or to the residents of a particular locality. [3][4]

6.12 Muslim centres and Christian churches of various denominations operate freely throughout the country. Approximately 40 percent of the population are at least nominally Christian. About 20 percent are at least nominally Muslim and about 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Of the Christians, approximately half are Roman Catholics and about half are affiliated with Protestant denominations. Christians are concentrated mainly in the southern and western provinces. The two anglophone provinces of the western regions are largely Roman Catholic. Muslims are concentrated mainly in the northern provinces where the locally dominant Fulani ethnic group is mostly Muslim and other ethnic groups known collectively as the Kirdi are generally partly Islamic. The Bamoun ethnic group of the western provinces is also largely Muslim. Traditional indigenous religions are practiced in rural areas throughout the country but rarely are practiced publicly in the cities, in part because many such religions are intrinsically local in character. [3][4]

6.13 The sites and personnel of religious institutions have been subject to human rights abuses committed by the security forces. In January 1998, security forces allegedly broke into a church in Douala, beat and stabbed the priest and several youths, raped young women and stole money. [3][4]

6.14 Relations between the various religious groups are generally amicable but there are tensions between some religious groups in certain regions. In the northern provinces, especially in rural areas, discrimination by Muslims against persons who practice traditional indigenous religions is strong and widespread. Some Christians in rural areas of the north complain of discrimination by Muslims. The northern region suffers from ethnic tensions between the Fulani, a Muslim group that conquered most of the region 200 years ago and the Kirdi, the descendants of groups that practiced traditional indigenous religions and whom the Fulani conquered or displaced, justifying their conquest on religious grounds. Some Kirdi have adopted Islam but the Kirdi remain socially, educationally and economically disadvantaged in comparison with the Fulani in the three northern provinces. [3][4]

6.15 The practice of witchcraft is a criminal offence under the Penal Code but persons are

generally prosecuted for this offence only in conjunction with some other offence, such as murder. Witchcraft traditionally has been a common explanation for diseases of which the causes were unknown. [6]

Freedom of Travel

6.16 The law does not restrict freedom of movement within the country, or an individual's right to settle in any place. The police do frequently stop travellers to check identification documents, vehicle registrations and tax receipts for security and immigration control purposes. [6]

6.17 Police commonly demand bribes from citizens whom they stop at roadblocks or at other points. This makes road travel both time-consuming and costly. Violent and sometimes fatal confrontations have occurred repeatedly at such checkpoints. [6]

6.18 There were no reports in 1999 that the Government used its passport control powers to prevent entry or exit from the country of critics and political opponents. Security forces, however, have sometimes prevented persons from travelling abroad if they have with them copies of private domestic newspapers. [5]

The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

6.19 The constitution provides for the right of citizens to change their government but dominance of the political process by the President and his party limits the ability of citizens to exercise this right. President Biya has controlled the Government since 1982 and the ruling party since 1984. The 1992 and 1997 presidential elections and the 1997 legislative contests were widely criticised and viewed as fraudulent by international and domestic observers. In these elections, administered by the Ministry of Territorial Administration, members of largely pro-opposition ethnic groups and inhabitants of largely pro-opposition localities effectively were prevented from registering or voting, registration and vote counting procedures were not transparent, a public announcement of results was delayed and the number of votes cast in some pro-government areas exceeded the adult population. [5][6]

6.20 Elections are held by balloting that officially is described as secret but may permit voters to leave the polling place with evidence of how they voted. At polling places on election days, registered citizens receive a package containing one card for each candidate. Citizens vote by depositing into a sealed ballot box, while inside a closed booth, an envelope containing one of these cards. [6]

6.21 Following the flawed 1997 legislative elections, international observers endorsed a series of reform measures, including the creation of a permanent and autonomous electoral commission to replace the present system of elections run by the Ministry of Territorial Administration. The Government's control of the electoral process leads to a variety of abuses including pre-election manipulation of voter registration lists. [6]

6.22 President Biya's October 1997 re-election was marred by serious procedural flaws as well as by a boycott by the three major opposition parties which made the outcome of the election a foregone conclusion. Election irregularities were more marked in opposition strongholds where boycotting opposition activists chose not to be present to monitor the voting count. No significant positive reforms have been undertaken to correct the flaws in the electoral process. [6]

Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment

6.23 The Penal Code proscribes torture, and renders inadmissible in court evidence obtained by torture and prohibits public servants from using undue force against any individual. President Biya also promulgated a new law in 1997 that bans torture by government officials. In practice, however, the security forces reportedly torture, beat and otherwise abuse prisoners and detainees. In a United Nations Human Rights Commission report published in November 1999, Sir Nigel Rodley, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture confirms that torture and ill-treatment are systematic and widespread in Cameroon's police and gendarmerie cells. In New Bell and other non-maximum security penal detention centres, beatings are common and prisoners are reportedly chained or flogged in their cells. Two forms of physical abuse commonly reported to be inflicted on detainees include the "balancoire", in which the victim, with his hands tied behind his back, is hung from a rod and beaten, often on the genitals. Non-violent political activists often have been subjected to such punitive physical abuse during detentions following round-ups of participants in anti-government demonstrations or opposition party political rallies. Police and gendarmes often beat detainees to extract confessions and the names and whereabouts of alleged criminals. [5][6][8][20][26][29][36]

Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

6.24 The Penal Code requires that an arrest warrant be required for any arrest, except when the criminal is caught in the act. In practice, however, security forces arrest and detain citizens arbitrarily. The Penal Code also stipulates that detainees be brought promptly before a magistrate. In practice, however, the security forces often fail to bring detainees promptly before a magistrate and sometimes hold them incommunicado for months or even years. Police may legally detain a person in custody in connection with a common crime for up to 24 hours, renewable three times, before bringing charges. The law, however, provides for the right to a judicial review of the legality of detention only in the two anglophone provinces. Elsewhere, the French legal tradition applies precluding judicial authorities from acting on a case until the administrative authority that ordered the detention turns the case over to the prosecutor. [5][6][26][29][34]

6.25 After a magistrate has issued a warrant to bring the case to trial, he may hold the detainee in administrative or pre-trial detention indefinitely pending court action. Such detention is often prolonged due to the understaffed and mismanaged court system. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Sir Nigel Rodley, 80% of the prison population consists of untried prisoners and that pre-trial detention is used as a punishment in itself. [6]

Prison Conditions

6.26 Prison conditions are harsh and life-threatening. Prisons are seriously overcrowded, unsanitary and inadequate, especially outside major urban areas. Prison officials torture, beat and otherwise physically abuse prisoners. Serious deficiencies in food, health care and sanitation due to lack of funds are common in almost all prisons, including in "private prisons" in the north operated by traditional rulers. Prisoners are kept in dilapidated colonial-era prisons, where the number of detainees is four to five times the original capacity. Health and medical care is almost non-existent. Prisoners' families are expected to provide food for their relatives in prison. Prison officials torture, beat and otherwise abuse prisoners. Prisoners routinely die due to harsh prison conditions and inadequate medical treatment. Juveniles are often imprisoned with adults, although not in the same cells. There are credible reports of sexual abuse of juvenile prisoners by

adult inmates. There are few detention centres for women; women are often imprisoned in male prisons and are often imprisoned with their children and babies. [5][6]

6.27 According to credible press reports, Douala's New Bell Prison, originally built to accommodate 600 inmates held more than 3,500 during 2000, of which 2,000 were pre-trial detainees. A 1997 report on prison conditions indicated that Bertoua Prison, which was built to hold 50 inmates, housed over 700 persons. The Kondengui Central Prison in Yaounde, constructed in 1967 to hold 1,500 inmates and equipped with only 16 toilets or showers and 400 beds, held approximately 3,300 inmates, including 700 women during 2000. Press reports indicate that the Bamenda Central Prison, built for 300 inmates, currently holds 900 persons, approximately 750 of whom are pre-trial detainees. The government official in charge of prisons reportedly said in June 1999, that the Central Prison of Bafoussam, built for 320 inmates held 3,140 persons. Overcrowding is exacerbated by the large number of long pre-trial detentions. In September 2000, an anglophone separatist detained in a prison in a francophone part of the country reportedly died of meningitis in prison after being refused medical treatment by the prison authorities even when it was clear his life was in danger. [5][6][8][33]

6.28 In the north of the country the Government allows traditional chiefs (Lamibe) to operate private prisons outside the government penal system. The International Committee of the Red Cross has declined to visit any prisons since 1992 because the Government has refused to guarantee it unrestricted access to all detention centres. The Cameroonian Red Cross and the National Human Rights Commission make frequent visits to prisons. [5]

Minorities and Ethnic Groups

6.29 Cameroon's population of 15 million people is divided into more than 200 ethnic groups and discriminatory practices between these various ethnic groups is common. Members of President Biya's Bulu ethnic group and of closely related Beti groups of southern Cameroon are represented disproportionately and hold key positions in government, the civil service, state-owned businesses, the security forces, the military and the ruling CPDM party. The large size and centralised character of the public sector has long been widely perceived to favour these groups. Since 1990, natives of the two anglophone provinces, the North West and South West Province, have suffered disproportionately from human rights abuses committed by the Government and its security forces, have been under-represented in the public sector and generally have believed that they have not received their fair share of public sector goods and services. [5][6]

6.30 Northern Cameroon suffers from ethnic tensions between the Fulani (or Peuhl), a Muslim group that conquered most of the region 200 years ago and the "Kirdi," the descendants of diverse groups who then practiced traditional indigenous religions and whom the Fulani conquered or displaced, justifying their conquest on religious grounds. Although some Kirdi subsequently have adopted Islam, the Kirdi remain socially, educationally and economically disadvantaged relative to the Fulani in the three northern provinces. Traditional Fulani rulers continue to wield great power over their subjects, often including Kirdi, sometimes subjecting them to tithing and forced labour. The slavery still practiced in parts of northern Cameroon is reported to be largely enslavement of Kirdi by Fulani. Although the UNDP Party is largely made up of Fulanis, the ruling CPDM Party is widely perceived to represent Fulani as well as Beti-Bulu interests. [6]

6.31 During the 1990s, local language broadcasts by government-controlled regional radio

stations in south Cameroon, as well as private French-language newspapers with close ties to leading government and CPDM figures, repeatedly have incited ethnic animosity against Bamilekes and anglophones. [6]

6.32 Members of the country's large Nigerian immigrant community often complain of illegal discrimination and even persecution by elements of the government. Crackdowns on undocumented Nigerian immigrants repeatedly have been announced by government officials. For example, in March and April 1999, security forces in Fako Division in the South West Province reportedly conducted mass arrests of foreigners without residence permits, most of whom were Nigerians. [6]

6.33 In June 1999, a land dispute between the Awing and Baligham tribes in the North West Province led to mass violence, in which several persons were injured; the dispute was subsequently adjudicated by a voluntary association of traditional rulers. [5]

6.34 The anglophone community based in the North West and South West Provinces claim that the francophone majority enjoy more power and economic benefits. The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) was established to represent the interests of the anglophone community and has advocated secession of the two anglophone provinces from the francophone provinces. It is reported that the anglophone community suffers disproportionately from human rights violations committed by the Government and its security forces. The SCNC is not a political party but shares a number of supporters with opposition parties, most notably the SDF party whose stronghold is the anglophone provinces. Some members of the SCNC have used violence in pursuit of SCNC political aims. The SDF want Cameroon to be a federal republic with greater autonomy for the two anglophone provinces and have a policy of using non-violent means to achieve this. The subject of greater autonomy for these provinces has been a source of political tension in Cameroon. President Biya is francophone and John Fru Ndi of the SDF is anglophone. [5][6]

6.35 A population of around 50,000 to 100,000 Baka (Pygmies), a term that encompasses several different ethnic groups, primarily live in the forested areas of the south and east provinces. Other ethnic groups often treat the Pygmies as inferior and sometimes subject them to unfair and exploitative labour practices. There have been reports of Pygmies complaining that the forests that they inhabit are being logged without proper compensation. [6]

6.36 Homosexuality is against the law in Cameroon but homosexuals are not routinely arrested or persecuted. [25]

Trade Unions and Workers Rights

6.37 The 1992 Labour Code allows workers to form and join trade unions of their choosing. The Labour Code permits groups of at least 20 workers to organise a union but also requires registration with the Ministry of Labour. In practice, however, independent unions have found it extremely difficult to obtain registration. Registered unions are subject to government domination and interference. [5][6]

6.38 The Labour Code recognises workers' right to strike but only after mandatory arbitration. Arbitration proceedings are not legally enforceable and can be overturned by the Government. The Labour Code provides for the protection of workers engaged in legal strikes and prohibits retribution against them. These provisions, however, do not apply to civil servants, employees of the penitentiary system or workers responsible for national security. [5][6]

6.39 The Labour Code provides for collective bargaining between workers and management in workplaces as well as between labour federations and business associations in each sector of the economy. The Labour Code prohibits anti-union discrimination and employers guilty of such discrimination are subject to fines. Employers found guilty, however, are not required to reinstate the workers against whom they discriminated. [5][6]

Human Rights Groups

6.40 Domestic and international human rights monitoring groups generally have considerable freedom to operate. A large number of human rights monitoring groups exist. Their activities are limited by a shortage of funds and trained personnel. The Government does not formally prevent human rights monitoring groups from operating but impedes the effectiveness of human rights groups by limiting access to prisoners, refusing to share information and increasingly by threatening and using violence against human rights workers. [6]

6.41 Human rights groups in Cameroon include the National League for Human Rights, the Organisation for Human Rights and Freedoms, the Association of Women Against Violence, the Cameroonian Association of Female Jurists, the Cameroonian Association for Children's Rights, Conscience Africaine, the Movement for the Defence of Human Rights and Liberties (MDHRL), the Human Rights Defence Group, the National Association of Non-Tribalists and Non-Racists, the Committee of Action for Women Against Violence, the Cameroon National Association for Family Welfare, Tribes Without Frontiers, the Association for the Promotion of Communal Initiatives, Christian Action for the Abolition for Torture and the League for Rights and Freedoms. A number of these groups issued press releases or reports with specific details of human rights abuses. [6][21]

6.42 The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms has conducted a number of investigations into human rights abuses but is prohibited by law from publishing information on specific human rights cases. The NCHRF does, however, submit reports on specific alleged abuses to the government agency or department involved, along with recommendations for improving conditions or punishing violators. [6]

Women

6.43 There are high levels of violence against women. No reliable statistics on violence against women are available but the large number of newspaper reports indicates that it is widespread. Women's rights advocates report that the law does not impose effective penalties against men who commit acts of domestic violence. There are no gender-specific assault laws despite the fact that women are the predominant victims of domestic violence. Spousal abuse is not a legal ground for divorce. In cases of sexual assault, a victim's family or village often imposes direct, summary punishment on the suspected perpetrator ranging from destruction of property to beating. [6]

6.44 Constitutional provisions recognise women's rights but women do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as men. No legal definition of discrimination exists and some points of civil law are prejudicial to women. The 1981 Civil Code allows a husband to oppose his wife's right to work in a separate profession if the protest is made in the interest of the household and the family's interest. Partly for this reason, some employers require a husband's permission before they hire a woman. [6]

6.45 Civil law offers a more equal standard than customary law which is far more discriminatory

against women, since in many regions a woman customarily is regarded as the property of her husband. Laws protecting women are not respected because of the importance attached to customs and traditions. Despite the law that fixes a minimum age of 15 years for a bride, many girls are married off by their families by the age of 12. Law and tradition allows polygyny but not polyandry. Whilst a man may be convicted of adultery only if the act takes place in his own home, a woman may be convicted without respect to venue. In the customary law of some ethnic groups, husbands not only maintain complete control over family property but can also divorce their wives in a traditional court without being required to provide either verifiable justification or alimony. The extent to which a woman may inherit from her husband normally is governed by traditional law in the absence of a will and customs vary from group to group. In many traditional societies, custom grants greater authority and benefits to male heirs rather than female heirs. [6]

6.46 Another problem facing women is forced marriage; in some regions, girls' parents can and do give them away in marriage without their consent. Often, a bride's parents are paid a "bride price" by the husband, who is sometimes many years older than the girl. When a married man dies, his widow is often unable to collect any inheritance, since she herself is considered part of the man's property. The widow is often forced to marry one of the deceased's brothers. Refusal means that she must repay the bride price in full and leave the family property. The lack of a national legal code covering the family leaves women defenceless against customs advantageous to men. [6]

6.47 Women also suffer from discrimination in access to education. The gap in school attendance rates between boys and girls is 9 per cent nationally and 14 per cent in the three northern provinces. This problem, which is especially acute in rural areas, results in higher levels of illiteracy among women than among men. According to a 1995 study by a UN agency, the adult literacy rate was 75 per cent for men but only 52 per cent for women. In addition, fewer girls are found at higher levels of education. [5]

Children

6.48 Cameroon has achieved one of the highest rates of school attendance in Africa, however, education facilities vary from region to region. Education, which is bilingual, is provided by the Government, missionary societies and private organisations. The Constitution provides for compulsory education to start at the age of 6 and is mandatory to the age of 14. It can continue until the age of 19 or 20 depending on the region. After almost a decade of budget cuts for education, the Government took measures in 2000 to improve access to schools. In June 2000, the National Assembly passed a budget bill that increased spending on national education by 49%. Education spending during the 1999/2000 fiscal year, however, was only 2% of the GDP. [1][5][6]

6.49 Since parents must pay fees for uniforms and books for primary school and because tuition and other fees for secondary education are even more costly, education remains unaffordable for many children. According to 1998 government statistics, approximately 3.5 million children, about 81% of all children were enrolled in school. [6]

6.50 A 1969 Ministerial Order and the 1992 Labour Code provide the legal framework for the protection of children in the field of labour and education. Article 86 of the Labour Code and the Ministerial Order both set the minimum age for the employment of children at 14. These tasks include moving heavy weights, dangerous and unhealthy tasks, working in confined areas, or

tasks that could hurt a child's morality. The order also states that a child's workday cannot exceed 8 hours. In order to allow children between the ages of 14 and 18 to improve their knowledge and education, employers are required to train them. To this end, work contracts must contain a training provision for these minors. Ministry of Labour inspectors responsible for enforcing the law, however, lack the resources to carry out an effective inspection programme. [6]

6.51 Female genital mutilation, which has been condemned by international health experts as damaging to both physical and psychological health, is not widely practiced throughout the country. It is a traditional custom and continues to be practiced in some areas of the Far North and South West Provinces. It includes the most severe form of the abuse, infibulation, and usually is practiced on pre-adolescent girls. The Government has criticised the practice but no law prohibits female genital mutilation. [6]

Treatment of Refugees

6.52 The law contains provisions for granting refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Government co-operates with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organisations in assisting refugees and the Government accepts for resettlement refugees who are granted refugee status by the UNHCR. The country has long been a haven for displaced persons and refugees from nearby countries. The Government provides first asylum to persons who arrive at the border without documentation but who can show a valid claim to refugee status. [6]

6.53 The UNHCR estimated that in 1999, there were around 47,000 refugees in the country for whom Cameroon was a country of first asylum. The majority of these persons are Chadians, whose total number was estimated to be more than 41,000. The remainder were principally from Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with small numbers from Liberia, Sudan and Ethiopia. [5]

6.54 There have been no confirmed reports of the forced returns of persons to a country where they feared persecution. Although the Government occasionally returns illegal immigrants, there were no reports of forced repatriation of recognised refugees. [6]

POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS

Action for Meritocracy and Equal Opportunity Party (AMEC)

Leader - Joachim Tabi Owono

Alliance pour la Démocratie et le Développement (ADD)

Secretary General - Garga Haman Adjì

Alliance Démocratique pour le Progrès du Cameroun (ADPC)

Formed in 1991

Alliance pour le Progrès et l'émancipation des dépossédés (APED)

Leader - Bohin Bohin. Formed in 1991

Alliance pour le Redressement du Cameroun (ARC)

Formed in 1992 by a number of opposition movements

Association Social-Démocrate du Cameroun (ASDC)

Formed in 1991

Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM)

Advocates a federal system of government

Congrès Panafricain du Cameroun (CPC)

Formed in 1991

Convention Libérale (CL)

Leader - Pierre-Flambeau Ngayap. Formed in 1991

Démocratie Intégrale au Cameroun (DIC)

Leader - Gustave Essaka. Formed in 1991

Front des Alliés pour le Changement (FAC)

Leader - Samuel Eboua. Formed in 1994. Comprising 16 opposition movements

Front Démocratique et Patriotique (FDP)

Formed in 1994. Comprises of 6 opposition parties

Liberal Democratic Alliance (LDA)

Leader - Henri Fossung

Mouvement pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (MDP)

Leader - Samuel Eboua

Mouvement pour la Défense de la République (MDR)

Leader - Dakole Daissala. Formed in 1991

Mouvement pour la Jeunesse du Cameroun (MLJC)

Leader - Marcel Yondo

Mouvement Progressif (MP)

Leader - Jean-Jacques Ekindi. Formed in 1991

Mouvement Social pour la Nouvelle Démocratie (MSND)

Leader - Yondo Black

Nouvelle Convention (NC)

Based in Yaounde

Parti de l'action du Peuple (PAP)

Leader - Victor Mukuelle Ngoh

Parti de l'alliance Libérale (PAL)

Leader - Céléstin Bedzigui

Parti des Démocrates Camerounais (PDC)

Leader - Louis-Tobie Mbida. Formed in 1991

Parti Libéral-Démocrate (PLD)

Leader - Njoh Litumbe. Formed in 1991

Parti National du Progrès (PNP)

Leader - Antar Gassagay

Parti Ouvrier Unifié du Cameroun (POUC)

Leader - Dieudonné Bizole

Parti Populaire pour le Développement (PPD)

Formed in 1997

Parti Républicain du Peuple Camerounais (PRPC)

Leader - Ateba Ngoua. Formed in 1991

Parti Socialiste Camerounais (PSC)

Leader - Jean-Pierre Dembele

Parti Socialiste Démocratique (PSD)

Leader - Ernest Koum Bin Biltik. Formed in 1991

Parti Socialiste Démocratique du Cameroun (PSDC)

Leader - Jean Michel Tekam

Rassemblement Camerounais pour la République (RCR)

Leader - Samuel Wouaffo

Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC)

Leader - President Paul Biya. Secretary General Joseph Charles Doumba.

Formed in 1966 as Union Nationale Camerounaise. Adopted present name in 1985

Rassemblement des Forces Patriotiques (RFP)

Leader - Ema Otou

Rassemblement pour l'unité Nationale (RUN)

Formed in 1991

Social Democratic Front (SDF)

Leader - John Fru Ndi. Formed in 1990

Social Democratic Movement (SDM)

Leader - Siga Asanga. Formed in 1995

Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC)

Leader - Sam Ekontang Elad. Formed in 1995

Union Démocratique du Cameroun (UDC)

Leader - Adamou Ndam Njoya. Formed in 1991

Union des Forces Démocratiques du Cameroun (UFDC)

Leader - Victorin Hameni Bieleu. Formed in 1991

Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (UNDP)

Chairman - Bello Bouba Maigari. Formed in 1991 (split in 1995)

Union du Peuple Africain (UPA)

Leader - Hubert Kamgang

Union des Populations Camerounaises (UPC)

Leader - Ndeh Ntumazah. Formed in 1948 and divided into two main factions in 1996:UPC (N)led by Ndeh Ntumazah and UPC (K), led by Augustin Kodock

Union des Républicains du Cameroun (URC)

Formed in 1991

Union Sociale Démocratique (USD)

Formed in 1991

PROMINENT PEOPLE

Ahmadou Ahidjo Elected first President of the Republic of Cameroon in 1960 and assumed the presidency of the Federal Republic of Cameroon in 1961. He resigned the presidency in 1982 and the chairmanship of the Union nationale camerounaise in 1983. Having been implicated in an attempted coup in 1983 he sought exile in France and Senegal. He was tried in his absence and was sentenced to death. This was later commuted to life imprisonment. He died in November 1989.

Paul Biya Became Prime Minister in 1975. Took over the presidency from Ahidjo in 1982. He won the 1984 and 1988 elections as sole candidate and the 1992 multiparty elections. He retained the presidency on 12 October 1997 and was sworn in for a further 7 years. Leader of the Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounaise (RDPC) - Cameroon Peoples Democratic Party (CPDM). Francophone politician.

John Fru Ndi Leader of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the Union pour le Changement (UPC). Anglophone politician.

Bello Bouba Maigari Appointed Prime Minister in 1982. Dismissed in 1983 having been implicated in an attempt to overthrow the government. In 1992 he was elected chairman of the Union Nationale pour la Democratie et le Progrès (UNDP). Appointed Minister of State in the Government of National Unity in December 1997.

John Foncha Founded the Kamerun National Democratic Party in 1955 and in 1959 became the Premier of British Cameroons. He subsequently served as Vice President of the Federal Republic of Cameroon between 1961 and 1970.

Simon Achidi Appointed Prime Minister in April 1992.

Achu Replaced as Prime Minister in September 1996. Anglophone politician.

Peter Mafany Musonge Appointed Prime Minister in September 1996. He was re-appointed on 7 December 1997. Anglophone politician.

CHRONOLOGY

1884 - German protectorate of Kamerun established

1919 - The Kamerun protectorate is divided into British and French zones of influence.

1922 - The territory is divided into French Cameroun and Northern and Southern Cameroun.

1948 - The Union des Populations Camerounaises (UDPC) is formed.

1955 - John Foncha forms the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP).

1957 - French Cameroun becomes an autonomous state.

1/1/60 - The Republic of Cameroon is established and Ahmadou

Ahidjo is elected as the 1st President.

1/10/61 - Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon merge to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. (Northern Cameroon merges with Nigeria). Ahmadou Ahidjo assumes the presidency with John Foncha as his vice president.

1966 - The Union Nationale Camerounaise (UNC) is formed.

6/1972 - The country is re-named the United Republic of Cameroon. Ahmadou Ahidjo retains the presidency.

4/1975 - Ahmadou Ahidjo is re-elected President.

6/1975 - Paul Biya is appointed Prime Minister.

4/1980 - Ahmadou Ahidjo is re-elected President.

11/1982 - Ahmadou Ahidjo resigns and Paul Biya assumes the presidency. Bello Bouba

1982 - Maigari becomes the Prime Minister.

22/8/82 - President Biya announces the suppression of an attempt to overthrow the government.

1983 - Bello Bouba Maigari is dismissed.

27/8/83 - Ahmadou Ahidjo resigns as Chairman of the UNC and seeks exile in France and Senegal.

1/84 - Paul Biya is re-elected as President.

2/84 - Ahmadou Ahidjo is tried in his absence for his alleged involvement in the 1983 coup

attempt. He is sentenced to death which is later commuted to life imprisonment.

4/1984 - An attempt by the Republican Guard to overthrow the government is suppressed.

3/1985 - The UNC is re-named the Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounaise (RDPC) - Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM).

4/1988 - Legislative and Presidential elections are held. Paul Biya retains the presidency.

11/1989 - Ahmadou Ahidjo dies.

6/1990 - Paul Biya is re-elected as President.

12/1990 - The National Assembly approves a constitutional amendment establishing a multi- party system.

4/1991 - Demonstrations and riots are held in protest against President Biya's reluctance to hold a conference to formulate a time-table for multi-party elections.

5/1991 - The University of Yaoundé is closed following the suppression of student demonstrations. 7 out of the 10 provinces are placed under military rule.

6/1991 - The government prohibits meetings of opposition parties and a general strike is called by the National Co-ordination Committee of Opposition Parties (NCCOP).

10/1991 - President Biya announces that legislative elections will take place in February 1992.

11/1991 - The ban on opposition gatherings is revoked.

12/1991 - Military rule in the 7 provinces ends.

1/3/92 - Legislative elections are held with the RDPC winning 88 seats and securing an absolute majority by forming an alliance with the Mouvement pour la défense de la République (MDR).

11/10/92 - Presidential elections are held and Paul Biya is re-elected.

5/1993 - Draft constitutional amendments are promulgated.

11/1993 - The government announces a reduction in the salary of public sector workers.

12/1993 - Opposition supporters organise a general strike.

1/1994 - Demonstrations by students demanding improved conditions are suppressed by security forces.

2/1994 - The government dismisses striking teachers.

10/1994 - The Social Democratic Front (SDF) organises a one-day strike.

7/1995 - Members of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) stage demonstrations demanding autonomy for the former portion of British Cameroons. Several independently-owned newspapers suspend publication in protest at press censorship.

11/1995 - Cameroon is admitted to the Commonwealth.

12/1995 - The National Assembly adopts revised constitutional amendments.

24/1/96 - Municipal elections are held with the RDPC/CPDM winning approximately 55% of the local government areas.

16/1/96 - The government lifts press censorship.

3/1997 - Attacks by armed groups against government and security buildings in several towns in North West Province leave approximately 10 dead. A curfew is imposed and a number of people are arrested.

17/5/97 - Legislative elections are held with the RDPC/CPDM winning 109 of the 180 seats contested.

3/8/97 - Re-run of elections in 7 constituencies in which the Supreme Court nullified the earlier election results. RDPC obtains all the seats.

12/10/97 - Presidential elections held. Boycotted by the 3 main opposition parties. Biya wins 92.6% of the vote.

5/11/97 - Biya sworn in as president for a 7 year term.

12/1997 - Members of the Government of National Unity announced.

1/1998 - Pius Njawé, editor of Le Messenger, is sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment and a fine of £500.

2/1998 & 3/1998 - Clashes between Nigeria and Cameroon over the disputed Bakassi Peninsula.

4/1998 - Pius Njawé's sentence is reduced on appeal to one year's imprisonment and a fine of £300.

7/1998 - Court sentences two police officers in connection with the death in custody of a burglary suspect in November 1997.

10/1998 - Njawé is granted a presidential pardon and released from prison.

11/1998 - Cameroon and Nigeria exchange 211 prisoners in the Bakassi Peninsula dispute. 10 people detained following the armed attacks in North-West Province in March 1997 are released unconditionally from prison.

3/1999 - In late March 1999, 247 people were left homeless when earth tremors and lava flows, caused by an eruption of Mount Cameroon, destroyed villages in South West Province. President Biya visited the area in April and promised government assistance and compensation to those affected by the eruptions.

4/2000 - The government ends its state monopoly on broadcasting.

12/2000 - Bill to set up National Elections Observatory becomes law

1/2001 - 21st Franco/African Summit held in Yaounde.

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