

CAMEROON COUNTRY ASSESSMENT
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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 The Republic of Cameroon lies on the west coast of Africa, with Nigeria to the west, Chad and the Central African Republic to the east and the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon to the south. It covers an area of 475,442 sq kms (183,569 sq miles) and has a 200 km coastline [1].

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 about 270 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 - have just over one fifth of the population of the eight francophone provinces. The ten provinces have administrative subdivisions called departments or divisions which are subdivided again into 276 sub-prefectures or sub-divisions. The contrasting influences of British and French rule remain evident in education, commerce, law and elsewhere, although unification of the civil service in 1972, official bilingualism and the integration of transport networks and economies have helped to reduce the disparities between the two zones [2][3d][28].

2.4 The country's population of approximately 15 million has 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. The national currency is the Communauté Financière Franc (CFA). 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 [3c][28].

2.5 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 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. 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 [9].

[For further information on Cameroon's geography, refer to the Cameroon section in *Africa South of the Sahara 2002*, source reference 2]

III 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].

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].

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].

3.4 In May 1972, a new constitution was endorsed. The federal system was replaced by a unitary republic and in June 1972 the country was re-named the United Republic of Cameroon. With a view to reducing its dependency on France, the Union Nationale Camerounaise (UNC), which was 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].

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 [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 [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 [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 [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 [2].

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

3.16 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].

3.17 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].

3.18 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].

3.19 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. 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 [3b][11][12][13][14].

3.20 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][15].

3.21 Following negotiations between the RDPC and elements of the political opposition, the new government of Cameroon which was announced in early December 1997, included members from four of Cameroon's 150 political parties. The RDPC retained 45 of the 50 ministerial posts. Among the non-RDPC appointees included in the Cabinet was Bello Bouba Maigari of the UNDP, one of several prominent figures to have boycotted the October 1997 elections; two other members of the UNDP were also appointed to the new Cabinet. 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 runner-up in the presidential election, Henri Hogbe Nlend (UPC), also accepted a ministerial post, as did Antar Gassagaye (NC) [1][16].

3.22 In December 2000, the National Assembly passed legislation that created the National Election Observatory in response to calls from opposition political parties for the creation of an independent electoral commission. The President signed the law in January 2001. The law provides for the Observatory to supervise electoral procedures from the registration of voters to the collection of reports after the polls; all polling stations are expected to have a representative from the Observatory. The law also provides that the Observatory have a presidentially-appointed national office to appoint local offices at the level of provinces, divisions, subdivisions and districts. Both opposition political parties and independent observers have expressed concern that the Observatory may be subject to influence from the ruling CPDM party because all of its 11 central members will be appointed by the President. The Observatory was

implemented in October 2001 [18][26][27]. The scheduled January 2002 municipal elections were postponed in early December 2001, ostensibly to give the Observatory time to ensure free and fair elections. They have been re-scheduled for July 2002 [3c].

IV STATE STRUCTURES

The Constitution

4.1 In May 1972, a new constitution was endorsed. The federal system was replaced by a unitary republic and in June 1972 the country was re-named the United Republic of Cameroon. With a view to reducing its dependency on France, the Union Nationale Camerounaise (UNC), which was 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 [2][24].

4.2 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 President's control over the country's administrative apparatus is extensive. The President is empowered to appoint and dismiss the Prime Minister and other cabinet ministers, judges, generals, provincial governors, prefects, sub-prefects and heads of Cameroon's parastatal firms (state-controlled), obligate or disburse expenditure, approve or veto regulations, declare states of emergency and appropriate and spend profits of parastatal firms. The President is not obliged to consult the National Assembly. 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. All local government officials are employees of the central government's Ministry of Territorial Administration from which local administrations obtain their budgets [3c].

4.3 The constitution declares that human beings, without distinction as to race, religion sex or belief, possess inalienable and sacred rights. It affirms its attachment to the fundamental freedoms embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Charter and the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and all related duly ratified international conventions [2].

4.4 The constitution provides for certain rights and obligations of the individual according to law. According to the provisions of the constitution:

- Every person has the right to settle in any place and to move about freely
- The home is inviolate. No search may be conducted except by virtue of the law
- The privacy of all correspondence is inviolate
- No person can be compelled to do what the law does not prescribe
- No person can be prosecuted, arrested or detained except according to law
- No person may be judged and punished, except by virtue of a law enacted and published before the offence is committed

- Every person has the right to a fair hearing in a court of law
- Every accused person is presumed innocent until found guilty during a court hearing conducted in strict compliance with the rights of defence
- Every person has a right to life, physical and moral integrity and to humane treatment in all circumstances. Under no circumstances shall any person be subjected to torture, cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment
- No person may be harassed on grounds of his origin, religious, philosophical or political opinions or beliefs
- The state shall be secular. The neutrality and independence of the state in respect of all religions is guaranteed
- Freedom of religion and worship is guaranteed
- The freedom of communication, of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, trade union activity, as well as the right to strike is guaranteed according to law
- The State guarantees the child's right to education. Primary education is compulsory.
- Every person is entitled to use, enjoy and dispose of property according to law. No person shall be deprived thereof, save for public purposes and subject to the payment of compensation according to law
- The rights of ownership of property may not be exercised in violation of the public interest or in such a way as to be prejudicial to the security, freedom and existence of property of other persons
- The protection of the environment is the duty of every citizen. The State shall ensure the protection and improvement of the environment
- Every person has the right and obligation to work
- Every person shall share in the burden of public expenditure according to his financial resources
- All citizens shall contribute to the defence of the Fatherland [4].

[The Political System](#)

4.5 Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency which has held presidential, municipal and legislative elections in the last six years. The head of state is the president who is elected for a seven-year term which is renewable once. The current President of Cameroon is Paul Biya. The president is directly elected by universal adult suffrage and the constitution provides for the right of citizens to change their government. Since the country's independence in 1960, a single party, now called the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), has remained in power and limited political choice. Although Cameroon has a multi-party political system, the

CPDM dominates the political process and severely limits the ability of citizens to exercise their right to change their government [3c][24][28]. The legislature is the unicameral National Assembly which has 180 members. National Assembly members are elected for five-year terms and meet in ordinary session three times a year. Laws are adopted by majority vote of members. The judiciary comes under the executive's Ministry of Justice. There is universal suffrage for persons over the age of twenty years [3d][28].

The Judiciary

4.6 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 [3c].

4.7 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 [3c].

4.8 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 [3c].

4.9 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 [3c].

4.10 Corruption and inefficiency in the courts are 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 are often charged or held and sometimes jailed under libel statutes considered by observers as unduly restrictive of press freedom [3c].

Military Service

4.11 There is no compulsory military service in Cameroon and recruitment into the armed forces is on a voluntary basis. The minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces is 18 years and the maximum age for recruitment is 22 years. Candidates must also hold a First School Leaving Certificate. There is no evidence of underage recruitment into the armed forces of Cameroon [6][31][32].

4.12 There is no legal provision for conscientious objection. The penalty for absence without leave from the army for a period of 30 days range from salary deductions to forced labour. After 30 days, continued absence without leave from the army is considered as desertion. The penalty for army desertion is imprisonment for up to 6 months in the first instance [6][31][32].

Internal Security

4.13 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. This special military unit operates above the authority of other security forces currently in the city. The Operational 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 [3b]. During 2001, the Operational Command temporarily ceased operations in response to increasing reports of human rights abuses. 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 [3c].

Legal Rights/Detention

4.14 The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and requires an arrest warrant, except when the criminal is caught in the act, however, security forces continue to arrest and detain citizens arbitrarily. The law also stipulates that detainees must be brought promptly before a magistrate. Arbitrary, prolonged detention, however, remains a serious problem as the security forces often fail to bring detainees promptly before a magistrate and sometimes hold them incommunicado for months or even years [3c].

4.15 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 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. After a magistrate has issued a warrant to bring the case to trial, he may hold the detainees in administrative or "pre-trial detention" indefinitely, pending court action. Such detention is often prolonged, due to the understaffed and mismanaged court system [3c].

4.16 According to UN Special Rapporteur Nigel Rodley, 80% of the prison population consists of untried prisoners. Rodley claimed that pre-trial detention is used in the perception both of the public and of the forces of law and order, as a sanction [8]. The law permits detention without charge by administrative authorities for renewable periods of 15 days, ostensibly in order to combat banditry and maintain public order. Persons taken into detention are frequently denied access to both legal counsel and family members. The law permits bail only in the anglophone provinces where the legal system includes features of British common law, however, bail is granted infrequently in those provinces [3c].

4.17 Article 320 of the Cameroonian Penal Code prescribes the death penalty for certain crimes, including premeditated murder, acts of violence against public servants with intent to kill and aggravated theft. Act No. 90/061 of 19 December 1990 amended the Penal Code, particularly in respect of the last point, establishing that only theft with violence causing death or serious injury is liable to the death penalty. Until 1997, when an execution was carried out at Mokolo Prison, no executions have taken place in Cameroon since 1988 [8].

Prisons and Prison Conditions

4.18 Prisons in Cameroon are seriously overcrowded, unsanitary and inadequate, especially outside major urban areas. Prisoners routinely die due to harsh prison conditions and inadequate medical treatment. Prison officials reportedly 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. Prisoners' families are expected to provide food for their relatives in prison. Health and medical care is almost non-existent [3c].

4.19 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 [3c].

4.20 Juveniles and non-violent prisoners are often incarcerated with adults although not usually in the same cells. There have been credible reports of sexual abuse of juvenile prisoners by adult inmates. Corruption among prison personnel is widespread. Persons awaiting trial are routinely held in cells with hardened criminals. There are few detention centres for women; women are routinely held in prison complexes with men, occasionally in the same cells. Mothers are often incarcerated with their children or

babies. Some high profile prisoners are able to avoid some of the abuse that the security forces routinely inflict on many common criminals. They are kept in elite wings of certain prisons where they enjoy relatively lenient treatment [3c].

4.21 Prison conditions cannot be blamed only on lack of financial or material resources but also result from deliberate policies or serious neglect on the part of the relevant officials. Prisoners sometimes can buy special treatment up to and including their freedom. Credible reports from Bafussam Central Prison indicate that freedom between 6 am and 6 pm has only been available daily to any prisoner who could afford the superintendent's weekly fee of US \$20 (15,000 CFA). Prisoners in Bafussam reportedly used their free time to steal the next week's fees [3b].

4.22 According to credible press reports, Douala's New Bell Prison, originally built to accommodate 600 inmates held more than 3,500 during 2001, 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 2001. 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 [3c].

Medical Services

4.23 The Government and Christian missions maintain hospitals and medical centres. In the early 1990s, there were three central hospitals in Cameroon, 73 general hospitals, 46 private hospitals and 792 health centres (112 of which were privately owned). 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 1998/99 was an estimated 31,000 million CFAs (3% of total spending) [1].

4.24 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, 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].

4.25 In March 2002, the Cameroonian Government unveiled a three-year programme against HIV/AIDS with the ultimate objective of lowering the national prevalence rate to under 10%. Drawn up by the National Committee Against AIDS, the programme pays special attention to helping the youth who are the hardest hit by AIDS. Emphasis will be placed on providing educational programmes that highlight all HIV-related issues: status

testing, protection against the disease and the need to change risky sexual behaviour. The availability of anti-retroviral drugs and other medicines also constitutes a focus of the three-year programme as the Government hopes to build upon efforts it began months ago with the acquisition of cheaper drugs. Counselling and psychological support constitutes the programme's third area of concentration. This effort will target the 1.5 million people who live with the virus and their relatives. The authorities also plan to increase the availability of condoms. Several international organisations and UN agencies such as WHO and UNAIDS, including the EU and the French Co-operation Agency, have contributed to the Government's 4.5 billion-franc effort against the disease [20].

4.26 Official statistics put the current prevalence rate (March 2002) at 11%. The anti-AIDS committee says 600 people are infected each day. At least 12% of 20 to 24-year-olds are HIV positive and 10% of 25 to 29-year-olds. Today in Cameroon (March 2002), HIV patients can buy generic drugs for 22,000 CFA francs, while the most expensive drug therapy has dropped from 375,000 francs to 68,000 francs [20].

The Education System

4.27 The constitution provides for a child's right to education and schooling is mandatory from the age of 6 to 14. Since independence, Cameroon has achieved one of the highest rates of school attendance in Africa but provisions of educational facilities varies according to region. Education, which is bilingual, is provided by the Government, missionary societies and private concerns. Education in state schools is available free of charge and the Government provides financial assistance for other schools [1]. In 2000, the Government took measures to improve access to schools. In February 2000, President Biya announced the elimination of tuition fees for state elementary schools. In June 2000, the National Assembly passed a budget bill that increased spending on national education by 49%. Since parents must pay uniform and book fees for primary school and because tuition and other fees for secondary education remain even more costly, education is unaffordable for many children [3b].

4.28 According to 1998 government statistics, approximately 3.5 million children, about 81% of all children were enrolled in school, however, school enrollment varies widely by region. In the Far North Province, it is reported that well under 50% of children attend school and the majority of these were boys. In practice, although not in law, girls suffer from discrimination in access to education throughout the country. This has resulted in higher literacy among men than among women. According to a 1995 study by a United Nations Agency, the adult literacy rate was 75% for men but only 52% for women. In addition, fewer girls are found at higher levels of education. According to a 1998/1999 study by the Technical Steering Committee of the Social Statistics Reference, women made up only 25% of students in specialised professional training programmes [3c].

Cameroonian Nationality

4.29 Cameroonian law establishes which individuals are regarded as Cameroonian nationals. The provisions for Cameroonian nationality are contained in the Cameroonian Nationality Code of 1968. Cameroon nationality can be acquired by birth in Cameroon, descent, marriage to a Cameroon national and by naturalisation [5].

4.30 According to the 1968 Cameroonian Nationality Code, Cameroonian nationality can be acquired at birth by a child with at least one parent who is Cameroonian (this also applies to children who are born illegitimately) and a child born in Cameroon of unknown parents is Cameroonian unless the child concerned is under the age of majority (21 years) and the child's descent is established from a foreigner along with the foreigner's nationality. A newborn child found in Cameroon is presumed to have been born in Cameroon until proven otherwise. A legitimate child born in Cameroon of foreign parents is regarded as Cameroonian if one of the parents was born in Cameroon. An illegitimate child born in Cameroon is regarded as Cameroonian, when the foreign parent from whom the child's descent is first established, was born there. Cameroonian nationality can be legally acquired by the sole fact of birth in Cameroon by any person who cannot avail himself of any other nationality [5].

4.31 According to the 1968 Cameroonian Nationality Code, Cameroonian nationality can be acquired by marriage by a foreign woman who marries a Cameroonian man. A foreign woman, in the event of the national law of her country permitting her to retain her nationality, has the option at the time of the marriage of refusing Cameroonian nationality [5].

4.32 According to the 1968 Cameroonian Nationality Code, Cameroonian nationality can be acquired by birth by any individual born in Cameroon of foreign parents by declaration in the months preceding the attainment of majority (21 years) on condition that he has at that date had his domicile or his habitual residence in Cameroon for at least five years. A child adopted by a person of Cameroonian nationality can declare in the six months preceding the attainment of majority (21 years), that he claims Cameroonian nationality, provided that at the time of his declaration he has his domicile or his residence in Cameroon [5].

4.33 According to the 1968 Cameroonian Nationality Code, Cameroonian nationality can be acquired by naturalisation in the form of a government decree. No one can be naturalised as Cameroonian if:

- he is under the age of 21 years
- he cannot prove habitual residence in Cameroon during the five consecutive years preceding the submission of his application
- his main interests are not in Cameroon
- if he does not have a decent life and habits, or if he has been the subject of a sentence for crimes or offences under common law not made good by rehabilitation or amnesty
- if he is not recognised of being of sound mind and body

No preliminary residency period is required of a foreigner for naturalisation purposes if he was born in Cameroon or married to a Cameroon national or if he has rendered exceptional exceptional services to Cameroon [5].

4.34 Cameroonian nationality can be lost by persons who come into the following categories:

- Any person of mature years (over 21) who acquires or voluntarily conserves a foreign nationality
- Any person who exercises the option to repudiate the status of Cameroonian nationality in accordance with law
- Any person who, filling a post in the public service of an international or foreign organisation, conserves it in spite of the injunction to resign made by the Cameroonian government [5].

V.A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Overview

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 [3c][10].

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 [4]. 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 [3c].

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" [4]. Despite this, and the requirement of the Penal Code that detainees be brought before a magistrate promptly, arbitrary prolonged detention is a problem [3c].

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 [3b].

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 [3b].

5.6 Security forces reportedly 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 [3c].

Freedom of Speech and the Media

5.7 The constitution provides for freedom of expression and of the press but the Government imposes 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 [3c]. These statutes sometimes are invoked by the

Government to silence criticism of the Government and government officials. Journalists who publish newspaper articles critical of government policy and government officials are subject to detentions, beatings and imprisonment [10].

5.8 The *Reporters Sans Frontieres 2001 Annual Report on Cameroon* reported that during 2000 journalists were subjected to pressure and obstruction in the course of their work. Several were arrested and their equipment were confiscated. Legal television broadcasts by the main opposition political party – the Social Democratic Front – were censored about ten times. On several occasions, officials from CRTV – the Cameroon public sector radio station – censored reports about members of the Government, or ordered journalists not to cover certain activities of the opposition [30].

5.9 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 [17]. Since 1997, formal censorship has ceased. Since 1996, the Government has frequently prosecuted its critics in the print media under the criminal libel laws. These laws authorise the Government, at its discretion and at the request of the plaintiff, to criminalise a civil libel suit, or to initiate a criminal libel suit in cases of alleged libel against the president and other high government officials. There continues to be allegations that government ministers and other high government officials offer to drop criminal libel suits in exchange for cash payments from newspapers or journalists [3c].

5.10 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 [3c].

5.11 The Government publishes an official newspaper, the *Cameroon Tribune*. This newspaper occasionally implies criticism of the Government but its reporters do not extensively report on activities or political parties critical of the Government. The newspaper also does not overtly criticise the ruling party or portray government programmes in an unfavourable light [3c].

5.12 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. The *Cameroon Tribune* has a print run of only approximately 5,000; the four most important opposition newspapers, *Dikalo*, *Le Messenger*, *Mutations* and *Nouvelle Expression*, have print runs of between 5,000 and 10,000 each [3c].

5.13 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 [3c].

5.14 On 3 April 2000, the Government issued a decree that implemented the 1990 law liberalising the broadcast media and sets out the conditions and procedures for

establishing independent radio and television stations. The decree ended a state-run Cameroon Radio/Television monopoly of the audio-visual media in Cameroon. Under the decree, radio licences will be awarded for five years, renewable by the Ministry of Communications. For television, licences will be awarded for ten years. There were no specific restrictions on political broadcasting but the decree said that programmes should reflect the plurality of Cameroonian society. Programmes must not be pornographic, exploit children or corrupt them morally and should not incite violence. The decree also said that 60% of broadcast music should be Cameroonian [23]. In July 2000, Jacques Fame Dongo, the Communications Minister, told private and public sector radio operators that those who failed to meet the requirements of the enforcement order of the broadcasting law would be closed down and their technical equipment confiscated [30].

5.15 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, giving it a distinct advantage over the new independent broadcasters. Like the *Cameroon Tribune*, CRTV provides broad reporting of CPDM functions, while giving relatively little attention to the political opposition. CRTV management which in the past repeatedly has instructed CRTV staff to ensure the Government views prevail at all times in CRTV broadcasts, continued during 2001 to punish CRTV journalists who criticised government policy [3c].

5.16 In April 2000, security forces arrested Severin Tchounkeu, publisher of the Douala-based French-language tri-weekly *La Nouvelle Expression* and detained him in the cells of the Secretariat of State for Defence for 3 days. The Government had filed a complaint against the paper for its 31 March 2000 “April Fool’s” article that said that bandits attacked the gendarmerie station in Yaounde, seizing arms, and holding the gendarmes hostage. The Government charged Tchounkeu and Bengono with “dissemination of false news” and released them pending trial [3c].

5.17 On 11 June 2001, the Government awarded US\$137,000 to Albert Mukong, a journalist and opposition activist for “abuses suffered at the hands of previous authorities”. Mukong, who had been detained from 1988 to 1990 for criticising the country’s one-party system and high level government officials, fled the country in 1990. His book, *Prisoner Without a Crime* was banned in the country. In 1994, Mukong took his case to the UN Human Rights Committee, which ruled that his rights to liberty, security of person, and freedom of expression had been violated and recommended that he be compensated for his “exceptionally harsh and degrading treatment” [3c].

5.18 On 16 July 2001, authorities arrested and detained Robert Harris Mindja Meka and Samuel Zang Des Joies, two journalists from *Le Devoir*, a French-language opposition weekly, allegedly for publishing false information on high-ranking government officials [3c].

5.19 On 17 July 2001, police allegedly threatened, harassed, arrested and detained Florent Ndjiki, Pierre Clement Tjomb and Francois Bikoro for irresponsible reporting on ruling party officials in their publications, *Envoye Special*, *L’Anecdote*, and *Le Phare*, three French-language opposition newspapers [3c].

5.20 On 22 August 2001, police arrested and detained journalist George Baongla allegedly for publishing false news in the 14 August 2001 issue of *Le Dementi*, a minor French-language opposition publication. In the article he linked the Minister of Economy and Finance to an embezzlement case without citing sources [3c].

Freedom of Religion

5.21 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 [3a].

5.22 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 [3a].

5.23 Muslim centres and Christian churches of various denominations operate freely throughout the country. Approximately 40% of the population are at least nominally Christian. About 20% are at least nominally Muslim and about 40% 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 [3a].

5.24 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 [3a].

5.25 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 [3a].

5.26 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 [3c].

Freedom of Assembly and Political Association

5.27 The law provides for freedom of assembly but the Government restricts this right in practice. The law requires organisers of public meetings, demonstrations or processions to notify government officials in advance but does not require prior government approval of public assemblies. The law also does not authorise the Government to suppress public assemblies that it has not approved of in advance. For many years, however, government officials have routinely asserted that this provision of the Penal Code implicitly authorises the Government to grant or deny permission to public assemblies. Government officials often have not granted permits to assemblies organised by persons or groups critical of the Government and repeatedly have used force to suppress public assemblies for which it has not issued permits [3c].

5.28 The law provides for freedom of political 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. The conditions for government recognition of political parties, a prerequisite for many political activities, are not onerous [3c]. Over 169 political parties operate legally in the country [2].

Employment Rights

5.29 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 [3c].

5.30 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 [3c].

5.31 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. No formal collective bargaining

negotiations have taken place since 1996. When labour disputes arise, the Government chooses which labour union to invite into the negotiations, selectively excluding some labour representatives. Once agreements are negotiated, there is no mechanism to enforce implementation; some agreements between the Government and labour unions have been shelved or ignored by the Government after being negotiated [3c].

5.32 The law prohibits forced or compulsory labour but it occurs in practice. The authorities continue to allow prison inmates to be contracted out to private employers or used as communal labour for municipal public works. There have been credible reports that slavery continues to be practiced in northern parts of the country. In the south and East Provinces, some Baka (Pygmies), including children, continue to be subjected to unfair and exploitive labour practices by landowners, such as working on the landowners' farms during harvest seasons without payment [3c].

People Trafficking

5.33 The law provides that any person who engages in trafficking in persons shall be punished with imprisonment of between 10 and 20 years and that the court may also impose a forfeiture penalty. Cameroon is a source, transit and destination point for internationally trafficked persons and trafficking of people also goes on within the country. Children are trafficked from and through the country to other west African countries for indentured or domestic servitude, farm labour or sexual exploitation. In 2000, the Government signed but has not yet ratified the United Nations-sponsored protocol concerning trafficking in persons [3c].

5.34 An International Labour Organisation study in March and April 2000 in Yaounde, Douala and Bamenda, revealed that trafficking accounted for 84% or approximately 530,000 of an estimated 610,000 child labourers. In most cases, intermediaries present themselves as businessmen, approaching parents with large families or custodians of orphans and promising to assist the child with education or training. The intermediary then pays the parents a sum of money and then takes the child to a city where the child is forced to work for remuneration, far below the minimum wage level. The report also indicated that Cameroon is a transit country for regional traffickers as well, transporting children between Nigeria, Benin, Niger, Chad, Togo, the Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic [3c].

5.35 The Government has criticised the practice of trafficking in persons and the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Insurance is responsible for fighting trafficking. The Ministry is seriously underfunded, however, and there were no known cases of persecution of traffickers or protection of victims. The Government has established an inter-agency committee to combat tracking and has developed a programme to find and return trafficked children [3c].

Freedom of Movement

5.36 The law does not restrict freedom of movement within the country or an individual's right to settle in any place. The law also does not restrict the individual's right to leave and re-enter the country. The Cameroonian authorities are not informed when a failed asylum seeker is returned to Cameroon and such individuals are not routinely stopped, detained and questioned. There is no legislation in Cameroon that provides for the

prosecution of individuals seeking asylum abroad even if the authorities were informed of the names of every returning failed asylum seeker [33].

5.37 The police do frequently stop travellers to check identification documents, vehicle registrations and tax receipts for security and immigration control purposes. 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 [3c].

5.38 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. There have been no confirmed reports of the forced returns of persons to a country where they feared persecution. There were no reports in 2001 of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution [3c].

5.39 The UNHCR estimated that in 2000, 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 [3c].

Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Punishment

5.40 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 [3c]. In a United Nations Human Rights Commission report published in November 1999, Sir Nigel Rodley, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture confirmed 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 [8].

5.41 Two forms of physical abuse commonly reported to be inflicted on detainees include the "bastinade", in which the victim is beaten on the soles of the feet and 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 [3c].

5.42 The security forces, including the Operational Command, reportedly subject prisoners and detainees to degrading treatment that includes stripping, confinement in severely overcrowded cells and denial of access to toilets or other sanitation facilities.

Police and gendarmes often beat detainees to extract confessions and the names and whereabouts of alleged criminals [3c]. The human rights group, Christian Action for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT), blamed Operational Command officers for a number of killings in Douala in 2000 [21]. In his report, UN Special Rapporteur Rodley noted that the Government increasingly was moving toward punishing offenders but that some of those incriminated act out of ignorance and others out of pure habit, for they have acted that way for a long time without fear of any consequences [8].

5.43 On 24 January 2001, the Douala Operational Command arrested 9 youths, later known as the “Bapenda 9”, who were suspected of stealing a gas canister in the Bapenda District of Douala. The young men have not been seen since immediately following their arrests and all sources believe that they were executed by members of the Command [3c].

5.44 In addition to the Bapenda 9, there were reports that the Douala Operational Command committed numerous summary executions. Conservative estimates place the number killed in the hundreds but Cardinal Tumi, the Archbishop of Douala, believes that the number may range as high as 1,000. There were reports that some persons were tortured before they were killed. The Operational Command was temporarily disbanded in the spring of 2001 but resumed operations later in the year. Command leaders ordered the execution of the 81 detainees who remained in the special Command prison facility known as “Kosovo”. The Operational Command operates above the authority of other security forces in the city and also killed some suspects in shoot-outs and high-speed car chases. 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 the Command then arrested and summarily executed. The Operational Command also uses neighbourhood sweeps to search for criminals, occasionally executing suspects for minor offences such as smoking marijuana. Press and other reports allege that the Operational Command has several mass graves, including one in the “Forest of monkeys” (Bois de Singes) and another off the “Old Road” between Douala and Edea, where bodies have been abandoned in pits or buried [3c].

5.45 Security forces in the remote North and Far North Provinces also were accused of extrajudicial killings, however, there were fewer reported incidents during 2001. Credible reports by the press and the Maoua-based Movement for the Defence of Human Rights and Liberties, describe a large but undetermined number of extrajudicial killings perpetrated by a special anti-gang gendarmarie unit, known as “Operation Octagon”, tasked with combating highwaymen. This unit was created under the direct authority of the Minister of Defence and operates outside the normal chain of command for law and order units. While some armed suspects were killed in firefights with security forces, there were credible reports that others caught in dragnet operations were executed summarily. Families of the deceased and human rights NGOs have accused the head of this unit, Colonel Pom, of extrajudicial killings of civilians. The MDHRTL estimates that up to 1,000 persons have been killed since the beginning of 1998. There is little information available to either support or refute this number but even some local authorities have admitted that the number of victims in rural areas probably exceed the numbers killed in Douala. The Government’s National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms corroborated this information in 2000, although it was unable to

determine the exact number of persons killed, since many of the victims' families were too frightened to speak with human rights groups [3c].

Arbitrary Interference with Privacy

5.46 The constitution prohibits arbitrary interference with privacy but these rights are subject to the higher interests of the state and there have been credible reports that police and gendarmes have harassed citizens, conducted searches without warrants and opened and seized mail. The law permits a police officer to enter a private home during daylight hours without a warrant if he is pursuing an inquiry and has reason to suspect that a crime has been committed. The police officer must have a warrant to make such a search after dark, however, a police officer may enter a private home at any time in pursuit of a criminal observed committing a crime [3c].

5.47 An administrative authority may authorise police to conduct neighbourhood sweeps of suspected criminal or stolen or illegal goods without individual warrants. Such sweeps are conducted frequently. Typically, the security forces seal off a neighbourhood, systematically search homes, arrest persons arbitrarily and seize suspicious or illegal articles. There have been credible reports that the security forces used these sweeps as a pretext to loot homes and arbitrarily arrest persons for minor offences, such as not possessing identity cards [3c].

V.B HUMAN RIGHTS: SPECIFIC GROUPS

Women

5.48 Domestic violence against women is common. There are no gender-specific assault laws, despite the fact that women are the predominate victims of domestic violence. 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. 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. ALVF, one of the few domestic NGOs dedicated to fighting violence against women, has reported that while the situation has not changed much in 2001, women's issues were at least being discussed more often and more openly by the country's political leaders. In July 2001, ALVF organised a seminar on early marriages on Maroua, Far North Province. Early marriage is prevalent, especially in this remote province, and many young women face severe health risks from pregnancies as early as 13 or 14 [3c].

5.49 Despite constitutional provisions recognising women's rights, women do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as men. Civil law theoretically provides equal status and rights for men and women, however, no legal definition of discrimination exists and some points of civil law are prejudicial to women. The law allows a husband to oppose his wife's right to work in a separate profession if the protest is made in the interests of the household and the family. While the law gives a woman the freedom to organise her own business, the law allows a husband to end his wife's commercial activity by notifying the clerk of the commerce tribunal of his opposition based upon the family's interests. Partly for this reason, some employers require a husband's permission before

they hire a woman [3c].

5.50 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 [3c].

5.51 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 [3c].

5.52 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% for men but only 52% for women. In addition, fewer girls are found at higher levels of education [3c].

Children

5.53 Education, which is bilingual, is provided by the Government, missionary societies, and private concerns. Education in state schools is available free of charge and the Government provides financial assistance for other schools. Primary education begins at six years of age. It lasts for six years in Eastern Cameroon (where it is officially compulsory) and for seven years in Western Cameroon. Secondary education, beginning at the age of 12 or 13, lasts for a further seven years [2]. In 2000, President Biya announced the elimination of tuition fees for elementary schools. Since parents must pay uniform and book fees for primary school and because tuition and other fees for secondary education remained even more costly, education is unaffordable for many children [3c].

5.54 The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Labour are responsible for enforcing existing child labour laws through site inspections of registered businesses, however, lack of resources inhibited an effective inspection programme. The law protects children in the field of labour and education and specifies penalties ranging

from fines to imprisonment for infringement of the law. On 17 April 2001, President Biya signed the decree that ratified International Labour Organisation Convention 138 that sets the minimum age for the employment of children. The minimum age for the employment of children is 14 years of age. The law also bans night work and enumerates tasks that cannot be performed legally by children between the ages of 14 and 18 years. These tasks include moving heavy weights, dangerous and unhealthy tasks, working in confined areas, or occupations, such as prostitution, which could hurt a child's morality. The law also states that a child's workday cannot exceed 8 hours. Employers are required to train children between the ages of 14 and 18 and work contracts must contain a training provision for minors. The law also prohibits children from working before 6 am or after midnight but this prohibition is not enforced effectively [3c].

5.55 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 [3c].

Ethnic Groups

5.56 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 in the 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 reportedly 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 [3c].

5.57 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 [3c].

5.58 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 [3c].

5.59 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 [3c].

Homosexuals

5.60 Under the Cameroonian Penal Code, homosexuality is considered to be a criminal offence. If a complaint is lodged, the police will investigate and if appropriate prosecute. The punishment ranges from imprisonment of between six months and five years and a fine [25].

The Social Democratic Front Party

5.61 The Social Democratic Front Party (SDF) is the largest opposition political party in Cameroon and is the only opposition political party to play a major role in opposition political activity [33]. The SDF was formed in May 1990 as an opposition party to the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). 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. It has its headquarters in the North West Provincial capital, Bamenda. At the last parliamentary election in 1997, the SDF won 43 seats in parliament. The SDF also runs 62 local councils. In accordance with its manifesto and constitution of 1990, the SDF pledges to:

- uphold true national unity by promoting political cohesion of Cameroonian society as a means of securing the basic needs for all the people, regardless of sectional, tribal, religious, social and linguistic interests
- promote the official bilingual and multicultural character of Cameroon
- uphold human dignity and the right to pursue lawfully and freely, ends which maximise and sustain individual and group happiness
- guarantee workers' rights to collective bargaining for decent working conditions and wages
- adopt policies of a free market economy and the private ownership and disposal of property
- promote commerce, equal opportunities and eliminate poverty
- develop, protect and preserve Cameroon's natural resources and the environment
- respect for the human rights of the individual

- abolish all forms of oppression and suppression
- adopt a multi-party participatory democracy
- pursue a policy of acquiring power through democratic elections
- uphold the sovereignty, self-determination and independence of the people
- promote international peace and co-operation in accordance with international law and practice
- guarantee the separation of powers, the rule of law and the equality of all citizens before the law [19].

5.62 Membership of the SDF is open to all Cameroonians irrespective of race, colour, ethnicity, creed, religious belief, place of birth, sex, social/economic status and linguistic distinctions provided that:

- the person is not below the age of 18 years and is not a member of another political party
- the person accepts the aims and objectives, principles, fundamental values, policies and programme of the SDF

Applications for membership can only be made on an individual basis. A person shall be registered as a member in the ward in which he normally resides. Every member must pay the annual prescribed fee and/or monthly contribution. Every member has the right to vote and be voted to any office or post in the SDF during any election provided he is and has been active in the SDF and is a current financial contributor of the SDF for a continuous period of 12 months [19].

5.63 The SDF has popular support in four provinces, namely the North West, West, South West and Littoral provinces. The SDF's organisational structure has five levels. These are the Wards, the Electoral Districts, the Divisional Co-ordination Committees, the Provincial Committees and the National Executive Committee. Unlike other political parties, the SDF does not have a women's section or a youth section. The SDF is active internationally. It has offices in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Belgium and the Netherlands [33].

5.64 The SDF is aware that some Cameroonian asylum applicants have submitted letters and documents purporting to have been issued by the SDF in support of their applications for asylum. The SDF have stated that such letters of support could only be issued by the Chairman of the SDF, John Fru Ndi. Although information may be obtained from local SDF leaders in preparing such letters, only John Fru Ndi has the authority to sign them. The rules on competence to sign this type of letter are laid down in the SDF's rules and have been so since the party was founded in 1990 [33].

5.65 In May 1995, the Social Democratic Front decided to issue membership cards once a year. John Fru Ndi's signature is pre-printed on the cards. The cards indicate which section the member belongs to. Genuine membership cards can reportedly be bought from unauthorised sources outside the SDF meaning that even a genuine

membership card may not have been issued by the SDF. Thus, even non-SDF members may have in their possession a genuine membership card. The SDF has only one type of membership card for all its members which means that there are no special cards for executive members or founding members. Cards produced since 1995 bear the signatures of the National Chairman and the Treasurer General. Normally, SDF cards are sold in the various organisational structures of the party to any member who wishes to buy one [33].

The Southern Cameroons National Council

5.66 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 in 1995 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 and is not registered with the Government as such but is a secessionist movement and shares a number of supporters with opposition parties, most notably the Social Democratic Front Party (SDF) whose stronghold is the anglophone provinces. Some members of the SCNC have used violence in pursuit of SCNC political aims but it is not official SCNC policy to use violence to obtain political concessions from the Government. The SCNC has an allied youth organisation called the Southern Cameroons Youth League [3c][33].

Human Rights Groups

5.67 A number of domestic and international human rights groups operate without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials are generally co-operative and responsive to their views. The activities of virtually all these groups are limited by a shortage of funds and trained personnel. Government officials repeatedly impede the effectiveness of human rights NGOs by limiting access to prisoners, by refusing to share information and increasingly by threatening and using violence against members of human rights groups [3c].

5.68 The government-established National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, (NCHRF) although hampered by a shortage of funds, has conducted a number of investigations into human rights abuses visited prisons and organised several human rights seminars aimed at judicial officials, security personnel and other government officials. Although the NCHRF infrequently criticises the Government's human rights abuses publicly, its staff intervened with government officials in specific cases of human rights abuse harassment by security forces, attempted to stop "Friday arrests" and attempted to obtain medical attention for jailed suspects in specific cases. The law prohibits the NCHRF from publishing information on specific human rights cases, however, it may and does submit reports on specific alleged abuses to the government authorities directly involved, along with recommendations for improving conditions or punishing violaters [3c].

5.69 The security forces can reportedly prevent human rights activists from travelling abroad to attend human rights seminars, meetings etc. On 16 January 2002,

Cameroonian human rights activist, Abdoulaye Math was arrested in Yaounde by officials of the Centre National de Recherche Exterieur (National Centre for External Research), a body composed of members of the security forces, the gendarmerie and the army. Math is the President of the Mouvement de la Defense des Droits de L'Homme et des Libertie (MDDHL). Abdoulaye Math was travelling to Dublin, Ireland, where he was to speak on the human rights situation in Cameroon at the International Platform for Human Rights Defenders, attended by among others by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, the United Nations Special Human Rights Defenders, Hina Jilani and the Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern. After his arrest, Abdoulaye Math was taken to a police station where he was detained for five hours and his passport and all the documents he had on him were confiscated, according to reports by Amnesty International. He was released around 1.00 am by a police officer who told him to go to his hotel as they had all his papers. He had an appointment with the Director of the National Centre for External Research on 17 January, where he pleaded for his papers to be returned. His papers, however, were not returned to him [29].

5.70 There are many human rights organisations and NGOs operating in Cameroon and 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's and Children's Rights
- The Human Rights Clinic and Education Centre
- The Association of Women Against Violence
- The Cameroon National Association for Family Welfare
- Tribes Without Frontiers
- The Association for the Promotion of Communal Initiatives and the League for Rights and Freedoms [3c].

VI MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

Cameroonian Official Documents

6.1 Cameroon has been described as one of the world's most corrupt countries and reportedly corruption exists at all levels of society. Transparency International, an international NGO based in Germany, ranked Cameroon as the world's most corrupt country in 1998 and 1999. One kind of corrupt practice is the falsification of official documents which is reportedly a widespread practice in Cameroon. Bribery, a lack of pre-printed blank documents and the existence of local versions of the same document make it difficult to assess whether official documents issued in Cameroon are genuine. There are no official rules on how official documents should look. Local officials sometimes produce their own forms if they run out of supplies of the relevant form. Thus, genuine documents may look crude or false. There are official names for administrative units, official positions etc., in English and French. Printed official documents are often bilingual **[33]**.

6.2 It is possible to forge official documents or obtain genuine documents fraudulently. Documents that are reportedly commonly forged include birth certificates, identity cards, marriage certificates, passports, arrest warrants and certificates of release. It is reportedly possible to buy blank official documents openly in markets in Cameroon **[33]**.

6.3 Cameroon is divided for administrative purposes into provinces, divisions and subdivisions. The central administrative authority is the Ministry for Territorial Administration. The civilian administration consists of governors responsible for provinces and senior division officers responsible for divisions. At the lowest level are division officers responsible for subdivisions. In each subdivision, the local division officer is the senior official and the local police and gendarmerie operate under his authority **[33]**.

6.4 Arrest warrants and summonses are issued and signed by the local governor or senior division officer. Arrest warrants may also be issued and signed by the local division officer. In practice, such documents are often issued and signed by senior police or gendarmerie officers at local level. Formally, this happens under the authority of the civil administration. Summonses may be issued by ordinary police officers in connection with, for example, a traffic offence. Arrest warrants and summonses may also be issued by the public prosecutor, known as the State Counsel, who is found in every division. Official documents such as arrest warrants are drawn up on pre-printed forms but there is no standard arrest warrant form. A person who is the subject of an arrest warrant is not given the arrest warrant or a copy of it, nor is it or a copy given to his relatives. An arrest warrant is simply shown to him by the police. Lawyers have the right of access to arrest warrants but only when the case comes before a court **[33]**.

MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES [2]

Action for Meritocracy and Equal Opportunity Party (AMEC)

Leader - Joachim Tabi Owono

Alliance pour la Démocratie et le Développement (ADD)

Secretary General - Garga Haman Adji

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 Africain pour la Nouvelle Indépendance et la Démocratie (MANIDEM)

Formerly a faction of the UPC. Leader – Anciet Ekane

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 Libération et le Développement du Cameroun (MLDC)

Breakaway faction of the MLJC. Leader – Marcel Yondo

Mouvement pour la Jeunesse du Cameroun (MLJC)

Leader – Dieudonne Tina

Mouvement Social pour la Nouvelle Démocratie (MSND)

Leader - Yondo Black

Nouvelle Convention (NC)

Based in Yaounde

Parti des Démocrates Camerounais (PDC)

Based in Yaounde. Leader: Louis-Tobie Mbida

Parti Libérale-Démocrate (PLD)

Formed in 1991. Leader - Njoh Litumbe

Parti Populaire pour le Développement (PPD)

Formed in 1997.

Parti Republicain du Peuple Camerounais (PRPC)

Formed in 1991. Leader – Ateba Ngoua

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 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 Democratique du Peuple sans Frontieres (RPDF)

Formed in 1997

Social Democratic Front (SDF)

The SDF is the largest opposition political party in Cameroon. The SDF wants Cameroon to be a federal republic with greater autonomy for the anglophone provinces.

Leader - John Fru Ndi. Formed in 1990

Social Democratic Movement (SDM)

Breakaway faction of the SDF. Leader - Siga Asanga. 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 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

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

Currently the President of Cameroon. 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.

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 January 1960 - The Republic of Cameroon is established and Ahmadou

Ahidjo is elected as the 1st President.

1 October 1961 - 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.

June 1972 - The country is re-named the United Republic of Cameroon. Ahmadou Ahidjo

retains the presidency.

April 1975 - Ahmadou Ahidjo is re-elected President.

June 1975 - Paul Biya is appointed Prime Minister.

April 1980 - Ahmadou Ahidjo is re-elected President.

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

1982 - Maigari becomes the Prime Minister.

22 August 1982 - President Biya announces the suppression of an attempt to overthrow the government.

1983 - Bello Bouba Maigari is dismissed.

27 August 1983 - Ahmadou Ahidjo resigns as Chairman of the UNC and seeks exile in France and Senegal.

January 1984 - Paul Biya is re-elected as President.

February 1984 - 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.

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

March 1985 - The UNC is re-named the Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounaise

(RDPC) - Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM).

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

November 1989 - Ahmadou Ahidjo dies.

June 1990 - Paul Biya is re-elected as President.

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

April 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.

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

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

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

November 1991 - The ban on opposition gatherings is revoked.

December 1991 - Military rule in the 7 provinces ends.

1 March 1992 - 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 October 1992 - Presidential elections are held and Paul Biya is re-elected.

May 1993 - Draft constitutional amendments are promulgated.

December 1993 - Opposition supporters organise a general strike.

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

July 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.

November 1995 - Cameroon is admitted to the Commonwealth.

December 1995 - The National Assembly adopts revised constitutional amendments.

24 January 1996 - Municipal elections are held with the RDPC/CPDM winning approximately 55% of the local government areas.

16 January 1996 - The government lifts press censorship.

17 May 1997 - Legislative elections are held with the RDPC/CPDM winning 109 of the 180 seats contested.

3 August 1997 - Re-run of elections in 7 constituencies in which the Supreme Court nullified the earlier election results. RDPC obtains all the seats.

12 October 1997 - Presidential elections held. Boycotted by the 3 main opposition parties. Biya wins 92.6% of the vote.

5 November 1997 - Biya sworn in as president for a 7 year term.

December 1997 - Members of the Government of National Unity announced.

February and March 1998 - Clashes between Nigeria and Cameroon over the disputed Bakassi Peninsula.

March 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.

April 2000 - The Government ends its state monopoly on broadcasting.

December 2000 - Bill to set up National Elections Observatory becomes law

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

July 2001 - The Government allows legally recognised political parties to be publicly funded

October 2001 - President Biya appoints the members of the National Elections Observatory

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