



**Home Office**

# **Cameroon**

**COUNTRY REPORT**

**October 2003**

**Country Information & Policy Unit**

**IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY DIRECTORATE  
HOME OFFICE, UNITED KINGDOM**

<b>CONTENTS</b>	
<b>1. <u>Scope of document</u></b>	<b>1.1 - 1.4</b>
<b>2. <u>Geography</u></b>	<b>2.1 - 2.5</b>
<b>3. <u>Economy</u></b>	<b>3.1 – 3.2</b>
<b>4. <u>History</u></b>	<b>4.1 – 4.25</b>
<b>Summary of events since independence (1960)</b>	<b>4.1 – 4.22</b>
- Paul Biya Presidency (1982 - Present)	4.5 – 4.12
- Elections (1996-1997)	4.13 – 4.18
- Elections (2002)	4.19 – 4.22
<b>The Bakassi Issue</b>	<b>4.23 – 4.25</b>
<b>5. <u>State Structures</u></b>	<b>5.1 – 5.39</b>
<b>The Constitution</b>	<b>5.1 – 5.8</b>
- Citizenship and Nationality	5.3 – 5.8
<b>Political System</b>	<b>5.9 – 5.12</b>
- Relationship with Neighbouring Countries	5.12
<b>Judiciary</b>	<b>5.13 – 5.17</b>
<b>Legal Rights/Detention</b>	<b>5.18 – 5.21</b>
- Death Penalty	5.21
<b>Internal Security</b>	<b>5.22</b>
<b>Prisons and Prison Conditions</b>	<b>5.23 – 5.28</b>
<b>Military Service</b>	<b>5.29 – 5.30</b>
- Conscientious Objectors and Deserters	5.30
<b>Medical Services</b>	<b>5.31 – 5.37</b>
- HIV/AIDS	5.32 – 5.34
- Tuberculosis	5.35
- Mental Health	5.36
- People with disabilities	5.37
<b>The Education System</b>	<b>5.37 – 5.39</b>

<b>6. <u>HUMAN RIGHTS</u></b>	
<b>6.A <u>HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES</u></b>	<b>6.1 – 6.59</b>
<b>Overview</b>	<b>6.1 – 6.13</b>
- Arrest and Arbitrary Detention	6.3 – 6.4
- Torture and other Inhumane or Degrading Treatment	6.5 – 6.7
- Disappearances	6.8
- Arbitrary or unlawful killings	6.9 – 6.10
- Arbitrary Interference with Privacy	6.11 - 6.12
- Security Forces – Human Rights Training	6.13
<b>Freedom of Speech and the Media</b>	<b>6.14 – 6.25</b>
- Journalists	6.22 – 6.25
<b>Freedom of Religion</b>	<b>6.26 – 6.31</b>
- The Practice of Witchcraft	6.31
<b>Freedom of Assembly and Political Association</b>	<b>6.32 - 6.43</b>
- Political Activism - The Social Democratic Front Party (SDF)	6.34 - 6.41
- Political Activism - The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC)	6.42 – 6.43
<b>Employment Rights</b>	<b>6.44 – 6.47</b>
<b>People Trafficking</b>	<b>6.48 – 6.50</b>
<b>Freedom of Movement</b>	<b>6.51 – 6.59</b>
- Treatment of Refugees	6.55 – 6.59
<b>6.B <u>HUMAN RIGHTS:SPECIFIC GROUPS</u></b>	<b>6.60 – 6.75</b>
<b>Ethnic Groups</b>	<b>6.60 – 6.63</b>
- Indigenous Persons	6.63
<b>Women</b>	<b>6.64 – 6.70</b>
- Violence Against Women	6.64
- Position in Society and Discrimination	6.65 – 6.69
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)	6.70
<b>Children</b>	<b>6.71 – 6.74</b>
- Child care arrangements	6.74
<b>Homosexuals</b>	<b>6.75</b>

<b>6.C <u>HUMAN RIGHTS:OTHER ISSUES</u></b>	<b>6.71 – 6.83</b>
Organised Crime and Corruption	6.76 – 6.79
Treatment of returned failed Asylum Seekers	6.80
Treatment of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	6.81 – 6.83
<b><u>ANNEXES</u></b>	
Chronology of Events	Annex A
Political Organisations	Annex B
Prominent People – Past and Present	Annex C
Election Results	Annex D
The Government	Annex E
Provisions of the Constitution	Annex F
The Cameroonian Nationality Code	Annex G
Human Rights Organisations	Annex H
References to Source Material	Annex I

## 1. SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

**1.1** This report has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, from information obtained from a wide variety of recognised sources. The document does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy.

**1.2** The report has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom.

**1.3** The report is referenced throughout. It is intended for use 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. These sources have been checked for currency, and as far as can be ascertained, remained relevant and up to date at the time the document was issued.

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

[Return to Contents](#)

## 2. 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. **[1a][6]** It covers an area of 475,442 sq kms (183,569 sq miles) and has a 200 km coastline. **[1a]** Yaoundé is the country's capital city although Douala is the largest city, main seaport and main industrial and commercial centre. **[2c]** The population of Cameroon was estimated in July 2003 to be 15.7 million with an annual growth rate of 2.02 percent. **[11]**

**2.2** Cameroon is divided into ten provinces - Central, Littoral, West, South West, North West, North, East, South, Adamaoua and Far North. Two of the provinces; the North West and South West, are anglophone provinces and have just over one fifth of the population. The other eight provinces are Francophone. **[1b]** The ten provinces are divided into 58 administrative departments or divisions which are sub-divided again into 349 sub-prefectures or sub-divisions. **[2c]** 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. **[1b]**

**2.3** Cameroon is a very ethnically diverse country with an estimated 250 ethnic groups. **[2c][6]** There are five large regional/cultural groups – western highlanders or grassfielders, including the Bamilike, Bamoun and many smaller entities in the north west; coastal tropical forest peoples, including the Bassa, Douala and many smaller

entities in the south west; southern tropical people, including the Ewondo, Bulu (sub-group of Beti), Fang (sub-group of Beti), Maka and pygmies (officially called Bakas); predominately Islamic peoples of the northern semi-arid regions (the Sahel) and central highlands, including the Fulani, (known as the Peuhl in French) and the Kirdi, non-Islamic or recently Islamic peoples of the northern desert and central highlands. **[2c]**

**2.4** The official languages are French and English although there are 24 major African language groups comprising of about 270 local languages. The people concentrated in the south west and north west provinces use standard English and “pidgin” as well as their local languages. In the northern provinces: Adamaoa, North and Far North – either French or Fulfulde - the language of the Fulani, is widely spoken. Elsewhere, French is the principal second language. Although pidgin and some local languages such as Ewondo, the dialect of a Beti clan from the Yaoundé area are also widely spoken. **[2c][6][10a][10b][11]**

**2.5** It is estimated that 53 percent of the population are Christians (mainly Roman Catholics), 25 percent adhere to traditional religious beliefs and 22 percent, mostly in the north, are Muslims. **[1a][1b]**

For further information on geography, refer to Europa Yearbook, source **[1a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

### **3. ECONOMY**

**3.1** 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 goals of the Rio Earth Summit. **[1a]** Over the past three years, GNP growth has averaged four to five percent annually. The national currency is the Communauté Financière Franc (CFA). Agriculture accounts for 25 percent of annual gross domestic product (GDP), with industry and the services sector representing 22 percent and 35 percent respectively. **[1a]**

**3.2** Because of its oil resources and favourable agricultural conditions, Cameroon has one of the best-endowed primary commodity economies in sub-Saharan Africa. International oil and cocoa prices have considerable impact on the economy. Still, it meets many of the serious problems facing other underdeveloped countries, such as a top-heavy civil service and a generally unfavourable climate for business enterprise. Since 1990, the government has embarked on various International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank programs designed to spur business investment, increase efficiency in agriculture, improve trade, and recapitalize the nation's banks. In June 2000, the government completed an IMF-sponsored, three-year structural adjustment program; however, the IMF is pressing for more reforms, including increased budget transparency, privatisation, and poverty reduction programs. **[11]** The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was approved by the IMF in August 2003 and has subsequently been included in the new state budget for the 2004 financial year. The completion of the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, also included in the new budget plans, is due by April 2004. **[30b][30c][35]**

## **4. HISTORY**

### **Summary of events since independence (1960)**

**4.1** Under the leadership of Ahmadou Ahidjo, who became Prime Minister in 1958, French Cameroon became independent, as the Republic of Cameroon, on 1 January 1960. The first election for the country's National Assembly, held in April 1960, was won by Ahidjo's party, the Union Camerounaise. In May, the new National Assembly elected Ahidjo to be the country's first President. **[1a]**

**4.2** Plebiscites were held in the northern and southern region of British Cameroons in February 1961. The northern region voted to merge with Nigeria (becoming the province of Sadauna), while the south voted for a union with the Republic of Cameroon, which took place on 1 October 1961. Ahmadou Ahidjo assumed the presidency of the new Federal Republic of Cameroon with John Foncha as his Vice-President. **[1a]**

**4.3** 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. **[1a]**

**4.4** 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. **[1b]**

### **Paul Biya Presidency (1982 – Present)**

**4.5** 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 reportedly obtaining 99.98 percent of the votes cast. **[1b]**

**4.6** In February 1984, in Biya's absence, Ahidjo and his two advisers were tried for their alleged part in the 1983 attempted coup, both receiving death sentences, which were later commuted to life imprisonment. A further attempt to overthrow the government was made in April 1984 by rebel members of the presidential guard, led by Col Saleh Ibrahim. The rebellion was suppressed by forces loyal to the President after three days of intense fighting. A total of 51 defendants subsequently received death sentences. 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. **[1b]**

**4.7** In March 1985, the UNC was renamed the Rassemblement Démocratique du peuple Camerounais (RDPC) or Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). In July 1987 the National Assembly approved a new electoral code providing for a multiple candidacy in public elections. Legislative and presidential elections were held in April 1988. Biya was re-elected unopposed to the presidency, securing 98.75 percent of the votes cast. In the elections to the National Assembly all the candidates were approved by the RDPC **[1a][1b]**

**4.8** 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. **[1b]**

**4.9** The legislative elections took place on 1 March 1992 but a number of parties, including the Social Democratic Front (SDF), refused to take part, claiming that the elections were being held too early and benefited the RDPC. The legislative elections were contested by 32 political parties. The RDPC won 88 of the 180 National Assembly seats, 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 percent of the votes. John Fru Ndi, leader of the SDF and Bello Bouba Maigari, the leader of the UNDP, secured 35.9 percent and 19.2 percent 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. **[1b][27d]**

**4.10** In 1993, an informal 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. During the second half of 1993, the opposition organised a series of anti-government strikes and demonstrations, which led to the detention of many activists. In December, public sector workers initiated a general strike, with the support of the opposition after the Government announced substantial salary reductions. **[1a][1b]**

**4.11** 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. **[1a]**

**4.12** 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. **[1b]**

## **Elections (1996-1997)**

**4.13** 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 percent of the local government areas. Opposition parties, including the SDF and the UNDP, made important gains, notably in major towns. This was followed, in many areas, by the immediate appointment of government delegates who were given overall control of municipal councils. **[1b]**

**4.14** Legislative elections were contested on 17 May 1997 by 46 political parties and were monitored by a Commonwealth observer mission. The announcement, made later in May 1997, of the provisional election results prompted claims from opposition parties of widespread electoral malpractice. The Commonwealth observer group also expressed general dissatisfaction with the election process. **[1b]**

**4.15** On 6 June 1997, the Supreme Court announced that the ruling RDPC had obtained 109 seats; the SDF won 43 seats; the UNDP won 13 seats; the UDC won five seats and the MLJC, the UPC and the MDR won one seat each. On 3 August 1997, further polls were conducted in seven constituencies, where the results had been annulled, owing to alleged irregularities. The RDPC won all of the seats, thus increasing its level of representation in the National Assembly to 116 seats. **[1b][27d]**

**4.16** It was announced in September 1997 that the presidential election would be held on 12 October 1997. Shortly afterwards, the three major opposition political parties, the Social Democratic Front, the UNDP and the UDC, declared a boycott of all elections, in protest at the absence of an independent electoral commission; a fourth opposition political party, the Union du peuple Africain, later joined the boycott. **[1a][6][27d]** In mid-September 1997, President Biya, was officially elected as the RDPC presidential candidate. At the election in October 1997, which was contested by seven candidates, Biya was re-elected, winning 92.6 percent of the votes cast. The level of voter participation in the election was disputed with official sources asserting that a record 81.4 percent of the electorate took part, while opposition leaders claimed that the abstention rate was higher than 80 percent. Biya was formally inaugurated as President on 3 November 1997. **[1a][27d]**

**4.17** 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 as well as two other members of the UNDP. The Government, which was formed in January 1998, was a coalition of the RDPC, UNDP, the UPC and the NC. All but five members of the cabinet belonged to the RDPC. **[1a]**

**4.18** In December 2000, in response to calls from opposition political parties for the creation of an independent electoral commission, the National Assembly passed legislation that created the National Election Observatory (NEO). 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 presidential-appointed national office to appoint local offices at the level of provinces, divisions, sub-divisions and districts. Both opposition political parties and independent observers have expressed concern that the Observatory may be subject to influence from the ruling RDPC party because all of its 11 central members will be appointed by the President. The Observatory was implemented in October 2001. [16b][16c]

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Elections (2002)**

**4.19** The President postponed scheduled January 2002 municipal elections to June 2002, ostensibly to give the NEO time to ensure free and fair elections. The NEO demonstrated a high level of political independence, facilitated voter registration, and encouraged free media access for opposition candidates. The President postponed the elections for another week after the opening of polls on June 23 since the administration failed to distribute electoral materials. [2a]

**4.20** Municipal and legislative elections were held concurrently on 30 June 2002. Out of the 180 seats available in the National Assembly, 133 were won by the ruling RDPC party, the SDF won 21 seats, the UDC won five seats, the UPC won three seats and the UNDP won one seat. The RDPC also won 286 out of the 336 council seats contested in the municipal elections. Opposition parties claimed that widespread electoral irregularities had taken place both before and after the national and municipal elections and demanded that the results be annulled. The Government refused, and in response, six opposition parties including the SDF refused to attend meetings of the newly elected bodies. [1b][6][14f]

**4.21** The Supreme Court cancelled voting in nine constituencies, where 17 seats were at stake because of voters' complaints. [1b] In September 2002, legislative elections for the 17 contested seats took place. The RDPC won 16 out of the 17 seats and the SDF won one seat. The RDPC now have a total of 149 seats in the National Assembly and the SDF have a total of 22 seats in the National Assembly. [6][14c][14f][25]

**4.22** In August 2003, Adamu Ndam Njoya of the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU) and Ni John Fru Ndi of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) signed a joint declaration aimed towards presenting a single opposition candidate for the presidential elections proposed for 2004. [28a][28b][33c]

For history prior to 1960 refer to Europa Yearbook, source [1a]

[Return to Contents](#)

## **The Bakassi Issue**

**4.23** In June 1991, the Nigerian Government claimed that, following a long-standing border dispute, Cameroon had annexed nine Nigerian fishing settlements, based on a 1913 agreement between Germany and the United Kingdom that ceded the Bakassi

peninsula in the Gulf of Guinea. Subsequent attempts to negotiate the dispute achieved little progress and further incursions by Cameroon were reported in November 1991. In early January 1994, it was reported that members of the Cameroonian security forces had entered Nigeria and raided villages, killing several Nigerian nationals. Nigeria subsequently occupied the two nominally Cameroonian islands of Dimant and Jabane in the Gulf of Guinea. Cameroon also despatched troops to the region although the two countries agreed to resume efforts to achieve a resolution of the dispute. In February 1994, the Cameroonian Government announced that it was to submit the matter to adjudication by the UN Security Council, the Organisation of African Unity and the International Court of Justice (ICJ). In March 1994, the Nigerian Government proposed that a referendum be held to decide the future of the contested areas. This proposal was rejected by the Cameroonian Government. **[1b]**

**4.24** In February 1996, renewed hostilities between Nigerian and Cameroonian forces in the Bakassi peninsula resulted in several casualties. Later that month, however, Cameroon and Nigeria agreed to refrain from further military action and discussions resumed. Reports of fighting between Nigerian and Cameroonian forces continued in 1997 and in 1998. In March 1998, at the preliminary ICJ hearing on the dispute, Nigeria argued that the ICJ lacked jurisdiction in the matter. In June, however, the ICJ declared itself competent to examine the dispute. In May 1999, the outgoing Nigerian head of state, General Abubakar, held talks with President Biya in Yaoundé. The two countries were reported to have agreed to resolve the dispute in an amicable way. It was announced, however, that the proceedings before the ICJ were to continue and in late May 1999, Nigeria filed its legal defence. In July 1999, the ICJ ruled that it would allow counter-claims from Nigeria relating to the apportioning of responsibility for border incidents; the counter-claims were to be examined alongside Cameroonian complaints. **[1b]**

**4.25** In October 2002, the ICJ finally made a decision on the Bakassi dispute. The ICJ awarded the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon. The court based its decision on the 1913 agreement between the United Kingdom and Germany. **[1a][19a][19b]** Despite having no option to appeal, Nigeria refused to accept the Court's decision, and troop deployments began to increase on both sides of the border. **[1a][19c]** Some of the inhabitants of the Bakassi peninsula have protested against the ICJ decision and expressed indignation about the loss of the territory to Cameroon. **[21]** In mid November, however, at a meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, mediated by the Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, the Presidents of Cameroon and Nigeria signed a joint communiqué announcing the creation of a bilateral 12 member Mixed Commission, to be headed by a UN Special Representative, with a mandate to achieve a peaceful solution to the Bakassi peninsula dispute. **[1a][20b]** The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission met again February, April, June and August 2003, in compliance with the resolutions taken in Geneva. The fifth meeting produced a working calendar that proposes to have implemented in full the ICJ judgement by August 2004. **[24g][33a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **5. STATE STRUCTURES**

## **The Constitution**

**5.1** In May 1972, a new Constitution was endorsed, under which the federal system was replaced by a unitary republic, but extensively modified in 1990, to allow for the return from one-party rule to a multi party system. **[1b][11][24a]** Amendments to the 1972 Constitution were made in 1996. The 1996 amendments retained a strongly centralised system of power based on presidential authority. The amendments imposed a limit of two seven-year terms on the President. The amendments provided for the creation of a partially elected and partially appointed senate along with the creation of a similarly constituted set of provincial assemblies with limited power over local affairs. The senate and regional council amendments have not yet been implemented. **[2a][24a]**

**5.2** 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. **[1b]**

## **Citizenship and Nationality**

**5.3** 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. **[4]**

**5.4** 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). 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. **[4]**

**5.5** A foreign woman who marries a Cameroonian man can acquire Cameroonian nationality. 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. **[4]**

**5.6** 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. [4]

**5.7** According to the 1968 Cameroonian Nationality Code, Cameroonian nationality can be acquired by naturalisation in the form of a government decree. An application for naturalisation shall be addressed to the Minister of Justice, Keeper of Seals. The applicant must set out clearly in the application the grounds for his desire to acquire Cameroonian nationality. No preliminary residency period is required of a foreigner for naturalisation purposes if he was born in Cameroon, married to a Cameroon national or if he has rendered exceptional services to Cameroon. [4]

**5.8** Any declaration acquiring, declining or renouncing Cameroonian nationality or abandoning the right to renounce it under the circumstances prescribed by law, shall be signed before the judge or president of the civil court at the chief-town of the sub-division in which the declarant resides. A declarant outside Cameroon shall sign before a diplomatic or consular representative of Cameroon. [4]

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Political System**

**5.9** Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency and central government. The head of state is the President who is elected by universal adult suffrage for a seven-year term. The present incumbent, Paul Biya, first came to power under the one party system. The Constitution provides for the right of citizens to change their government and all citizens over the age of twenty years are eligible to vote in elections. [2c][24a] The control of the President 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 as appropriate and spend profits of parastatal firms. The President is not obliged to consult the National Assembly. The Prime Minister, who is currently Peter Mafany Musonge, is head of government. [1b][2a]

**5.10** Since the country's independence in 1960, a single party, now called the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (Rassemblement Democratique du peuple Camerounais, RDPC), has remained in power and limited political choice. Although Cameroon has a multi-party political system, the RDPC dominates the political process and severely limits the ability of citizens to exercise their right to change their government. [2a][6][11]

**5.11** The legislature is the unicameral National Assembly which has 180 members. National Assembly members are elected by direct popular vote to serve five-year terms and they meet briefly in ordinary session three times a year, in March June and November. Laws are adopted by the majority vote of members. The judiciary comes under the executive's Ministry of Justice. [2c][11]

[Return to Contents](#)

## Relations with Neighbouring Countries

**5.12** Apart from a border dispute with Nigeria, relations with neighbouring countries are generally harmonious. In March 2001, however, there were fears of a border conflict between Cameroon and the Central African Republic (CAR) following incursions by heavily armed CAR troops into Cameroonian territory and their dismantling of a border customs post. Relations between Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea were strained from March 2002, when Equatorial Guinea gave technical support to Nigeria's claim in the Bakassi dispute at the International Court of Justice. Tensions increased in August 2002 following Cameroon's temporary suspension of the issue of visas to Equatorial Guinea nationals in protest at the alleged harassment of Cameroonian nationals by the police in Equatorial Guinea. **[1b]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## The Judiciary

**5.13** 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. **[2a][11][31]**

**5.14** 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. **[2a]**

**5.15** 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. 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. Most traditional courts permit appeal of their decisions to traditional authorities of higher rank. **[2a]**

**5.16** 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. Military trials are often subject to irregularities and political influence. **[2a]**

**5.17** 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. **[2a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Legal Rights/Detention**

**5.18** Under the law, a person caught in the act of committing a crime may be arrested and detained immediately. Otherwise, the law requires an arrest warrant. However, arbitrary arrest and detention by the security forces continue to be serious ongoing problems. **[2a]** 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. **[2a][5a]**

**5.19** 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. **[2a][5a]** The law provides for the right to a judicial review of the legality of detention only in the two anglophone provinces. Otherwise, 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. **[2a]**

**5.20** According to UN Special Rapporteur Nigel Rodley, 80 percent 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. **[2a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Death Penalty**

**5.21** 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 to aggravated theft, establishing that only theft with violence causing death or serious injury is liable to the death penalty. No executions have taken place in Cameroon since 1988. **[8]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Internal Security**

**5.22** Internal security responsibilities, also dominated by the Presidency, were 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. The police and the Gendarmerie have dominant roles in enforcing internal security laws. The civilian Minister of Defence and the civilian head of police are also responsible for internal security. Security forces continue to commit numerous serious human rights abuses. **[2a][23]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Prisons and Prison Conditions**

**5.23** Prisons in Cameroon are seriously overcrowded, unsanitary and inadequate, especially outside major urban areas. Prisoners often die due to harsh prison conditions and inadequate medical treatment. Prison officials reportedly torture, beat and otherwise physically abuse prisoners. Due to a lack of funds, serious deficiencies in food, health care, and sanitation were common in almost all prisons, including "private prisons" in the north. 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. **[2a]**

**5.24** In the north of the country, the Government allows traditional chiefs (Lamibe) to operate private prisons outside the government penal system. The Government has granted international humanitarian organisations access to prisoners. The Cameroonian Red Cross the NCHRF and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) visited prisons during 2002. Although the ICRC does not release its findings publicly, the Government generally complied with its agreement with the ICRC. **[2a]**

**5.25** The law specifies that children should not be detained without trial beyond three months after an investigation; however, the Government detained children for longer periods of time. Juvenile prisoners often were incarcerated with adults, occasionally in the same cells or wards. There were credible reports that adult inmates sexually abused juvenile prisoners. Persons awaiting trial routinely were held in cells with convicted criminals. There were few detention centres for women, who often were held in prison complexes with men, occasionally in the same cells. Mothers often were incarcerated with their children or babies. Some high-profile prisoners often were kept in more privileged wings of certain prisons where they enjoyed relatively lenient treatment and were able to avoid some of the abuses that the security forces routinely inflicted on other prisoners. **[2a]**

**5.26** Corruption among prison personnel was widespread. Prisoners sometimes could "buy" special favours or treatment, including temporary freedom. According to the US

Department of State report, freedom between 6am and 6pm in Bafussam Central Prison is only available daily to any prisoner who could afford the superintendent's weekly fee of US\$20 (15,000 CFA). Prisoners in Bafoussam reportedly used their purchased freedom to steal the following week's fees. [2a]

**5.27** In a report presented to the UN Human Rights Commission, the Cameroonian League for Human Rights provided figures for the country's principal prison facilities. Yaoundé-Kondengui prison contained 9,530 detainees for 2,500 places; Douala New Bell prison, 7,000 detainees for 1,500 places; Bamenda prison, 4,855 detainees for 330 places; Bafoussam prison, 5,225 detainees for 850 places; Edea prison, 4,255 detainees for 750 places; Dschang prison, 6,845 detainees for 715 places; Garoua prison, 4,636 detainees for 280 places; and Nkongsamba prison, 8,753 detainees for 620 places. Overcrowding was exacerbated by the large number of long pre-trial detentions. More than 1,400 of the inmates of the Douala prison were pre-trial detainees. [2a]

**5.28** In September 2002, Dr. Vera Mlangazuwa Chirwa, Special Rapporteur on Prisons and the Conditions of Detention in Africa, working with the African Commission for Human and People's Rights, visited seven prisons (Yaoundé, Bafoussam, Douala, Bamenda, Garoua, Maroua, and Bafang), five gendarmerie detention cells, and five police station detention cells. In addition to those officially selected prisons and detention cells, Dr. Mlangazuwa made surprise visits to other prisons. Her team addressed approximately 6,000 prisoners (roughly 28 percent of the prison population) and personally interviewed 150 detainees. In her assessment of the visit, Dr Mlangazuwa said that congestion, poor nutrition, and lack of adequate health care were principal problems in the prisons; however, she noted that there was a productive prisoner work programme. [2a]

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Military Service**

**5.29** The Armed Forces number 26,000 to 27,000 personnel. 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. [9][13]

## **Conscientious Objectors and Deserters**

**5.30** There is no legal provision for conscientious objection. The penalties 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 six months in the first instance. [18a]

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Medical Services**

**5.31** 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. **[1a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **HIV/AIDS**

**5.32** The World Bank has loaned Cameroon US\$50 million to pay for 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. **[17a]** Although the World Bank has introduced measures to reduce the rates for those who have regular income, at present there is no help to those who have no regular income. **[18e]**

**5.33** 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 fewer than 10 percent. 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 is placed on providing educational programmes that highlight all HIV-related issues: status testing, protection against the disease and the need to change promiscuous sexual behaviour. The availability of anti-retroviral drugs and other medicines also constitutes a focus of the three-year programme. 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 as well as 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. **[14d]**

**5.34** Treatment for HIV/AIDS is available at a joint Cameroonian Government and French Co-operation established clinic in Yaoundé Central Hospital, as well as 17 other agreed centres. Anti-retroviral drugs, which are needed to treat people suffering from AIDS, are available in Cameroon. The cost of anti-retroviral drugs, designed for the treatment of AIDS, decreased as from 1 August 2002. **[17b]** Anti-retroviral drugs range from a cost of CFA 22,000 to CFA 203,000 (£22 to £203) per month. **[18e]** Health authorities in Cameroon signed an agreement with the Indian laboratory CIPLA, for the production of some anti-AIDS generic medicines, thus helping to bring down the cost of anti-retroviral drugs. The Public Health Minister has stated that the decrease in the cost of the drugs reflects the Government's policy to enable people infected with AIDS to have access to better medical care. The cost of viral tests, meant for people undergoing anti-AIDS treatment, decreased in July 2002 from CFA 56,000 to CFA 38,090 (£56 to

£38). **[17b]** According to the Yaoundé Central Hospital, an AIDS patient in Cameroon spends an average of CFA 195,000 (£195) on biological check-ups and CFA 300,000 (£300) on anti-AIDS drugs annually. **[24d]** In 2003, Biya claimed that most effective therapies had already been made available to the majority of patients. **[14f]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Tuberculosis**

**5.35** Treatment for tuberculosis is readily available in Cameroon both in the private and public sector. There are 163 Diagnostic centres around the country but the cost of treatment varies. In the public hospitals the cost of treatment is generally affordable at CFA 5,000 (£5) per course / six months, plus CFA 15,000 (£15) for the total hospitalisation. One private hospital in Yaoundé charges CFA 40,000 (£40) per night and CFA (£20) for a consultation, as well as fees for additional tests. Patients can get better treatment through private hospitals. However, the system is corrupt and inefficient and patients often have to resort to hard financial negotiating before receiving their treatment, resulting in lengthy delays. **[18c]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Mental Health**

**5.36** Although Cameroon has a Department of Mental Health, a Professor of Psychiatry, and a couple of trained mental health doctors working in the public sector, it is difficult to get treatment without adequate finances. However, most drugs used for treating mental illnesses are available at a cost. **[18d]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **People with Disabilities**

**5.37** The law provides certain rights to persons with disabilities, including access to public institutions, medical treatment, and education. The Government was obliged to bear part of the educational expense of persons with disabilities, to employ them where possible, and to provide them with public assistance when necessary; however, the Government rarely respected these rights. There were few facilities for persons with disabilities and little public assistance of any kind. Lack of facilities and care for persons with mental disabilities in particular was acute. In recent years, the Government has reportedly reduced the share of its expenditures benefiting persons with disabilities and has terminated subsidies to NGOs that helped them. Society largely tended to treat those with disabilities as misfits, and many felt that providing assistance was the responsibility of churches or foreign NGOs. The law does not mandate special access provisions to private buildings and facilities for persons with disabilities. **[2a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **The Education System**

**5.38** The Constitution provides for a child's right to education, and schooling is mandatory from the age of six to 14 years. 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. **[1a]** The Government took measures in 2002 to improve access to schools. Since parents had to pay uniform and book fees for primary school, and because tuition and other fees for secondary education remained costly despite the elimination of tuition fees for public elementary schools, education was largely unaffordable for many children. **[2a]**

**5.39** According to statistics published in September 2002 in the Cameroon Tribune, approximately 4.5 million children, or 85 percent of all children, were enrolled in school; however, school enrolment varied widely by region. In the Far North Province, it was reported that well below 50 percent of children attended school; the majority of which were boys. Though illegal, in practice girls continued to suffer from discrimination and access to education throughout the country. **[2a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **6. HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **6.A. HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES**

#### **Overview**

**6.1** 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. **[2a][6][9]** Conditions in prisons are harsh and life-threatening. The security forces arrest and arbitrarily detain various opposition politicians, local human rights monitors and other citizens, often holding them for prolonged periods, often without charges or a chance for trial and, at times, incommunicado. The Government restricts freedom of speech and freedom of association and assembly. **[2a][6]**

**6.2** 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. **[3]** 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. **[2a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

#### **Arrest and Arbitrary Detention**

**6.3** 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". **[3]** The law also stipulates

that detainees must be brought promptly before a magistrate; despite this, arbitrary prolonged detention remained a serious problem and sometimes persons were held incommunicado for months or even years. **[2a]**

**6.4** 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. **[5b]** Legislation also allows administrative detention without charge for renewable periods of 15 days, ostensibly to combat banditry and maintain public order. Security forces also continue to arrest and arbitrarily detain various opposition politicians, local human rights monitors, journalists, and other critics of the Government, often holding them for prolonged periods, without charges or a chance for trial and, at times, incommunicado. **[2a][5a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

### **Torture and other Inhumane or Degrading Treatment**

**6.5** 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. **[2a][5a]** 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]**

**6.6** 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. **[2a]**

**6.7** 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. **[2a]** 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]**

[Return to Contents](#)

### **Disappearance**

**6.8** On 24 January 2001, the Douala Operational Command arrested nine youths, later known as the "Bepanda 9", who were suspected of stealing a gas canister in the Bepanda 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. [2a][30] A trial was held of eight Operational Command officers implicated in the disappearances. Of the eight men, two gendarmes were found guilty of the lesser crime of abuse of their authority and complicity in the abuse of authority and sentenced to short prison terms. The other six gendarmes tried in the same case were acquitted. [5a][6]

### **Arbitrary or Unlawful Killings**

**6.9** During 2001 Douala's military anticrime unit, the Operational Command, reportedly was suspended amid increasing reports of human rights abuses; the status of the Command was unknown at the end of 2002. There were reports that prior to suspension, Command leaders ordered the execution of the 81 detainees who remained in the special Command prison facility, known as "Kosovo". 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. 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. [2a]

**6.10** Security forces in the remote North and Far North Provinces were also accused of extrajudicial killings, however, there were fewer reported incidents during 2002. The security situation in the northern provinces appeared to have improved, but there still were occasional accusations of summary executions following acts of banditry. Local human rights groups noted that local authorities, even the special anti-gang units, paid more attention to due process than in previous years; they believed that the paramilitary forces received strict instructions to restrain their activities in an attempt to avoid another scandal that would embarrass the Government. However, authorities in the region maintained that the anti-gang units largely have completed their mission and that the remaining bandits were living in fear, thus eliminating the necessity for excessive use of force. They also noted a significant drop in crime in the region. [2a]

[Return to Contents](#)

### **Arbitrary Interference with Privacy**

**6.11** 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. **[2a]**

**6.12** An administrative authority may authorise police to conduct neighbourhood sweeps for suspected criminals, 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. **[2a]**

### **Security Forces – Human Rights Training**

**6.13** In September 2003, gendarme officials from different units of the command nation-wide, were trained by the Red Cross International Committee (RCIC) in International Humanitarian Law in an attempt to reduce the human rights violations committed by the security forces. **[32a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

### **Freedom of Speech and the Media**

**6.14** The Constitution provides for freedom of speech 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. **[2a]** However, the Cameroonian courts increasingly imposed fines instead of prison sentences on journalists breaking the press laws. Nevertheless, in some cases the size of the fine entailed a major financial burden for the newspaper and occasionally threatened its survival. **[15a]**

**6.15** The Government 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. **[2a]**

**6.16** 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. **[2a]** In February 2002, the privately owned newspaper "Mutations" became the country's second daily newspaper, joining the state owned "Cameroon Tribune". **[15a]**

**6.17** 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. **[2a]**

**6.18** The Government largely ceased to interfere with private newspaper distribution or seize print runs of private newspapers. **[2a]** However, during 2002 intimidation and harassment of independent journalists intensified. On occasion, the security forces

confiscated travel documents preventing people considered to be critical of the government from travelling abroad and taking part in international meetings. Publishers, journalists and human rights activists were arrested by the gendarmerie and detained for weeks without charge. Journalists from independent newspapers and press groups were particularly targeted. **[5a]**

**6.19** 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 Yaoundé and Douala and prices are high. Print media reaches only a small percentage of the population, most notably the urban elite. **[2a][12]**

**6.20** Radio remains the most important medium for reaching most citizens. There are approximately two million radio sets in the country. Television broadcasts are of less importance than radio broadcasts but are more influential than print media. **[2a]**

**6.21** On 3 April 2000, the Government issued a decree that implemented the 1990 law liberalising the broadcast media and setting 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 percent of broadcast music should be Cameroonian. **[16a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Journalists**

**6.22** 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 RDPC functions, while giving relatively little attention to the political opposition. CRTV management has in the past repeatedly instructed CRTV staff to ensure the Government’s views prevail at all times in CRTV broadcasts. During 2001, CRTV management punished CRTV journalists who criticised government policy. **[2a]**

**6.23** Although privately owned radio and television stations now compete with state owned broadcasters, many of them operate illegally as the authorities have not acted on their requests for accreditation. While the radio stations sometimes showed a degree of independence and criticism, the television just relayed government information and avoided controversy. **[15a]** Several radio and television stations have been closed down by the government in 2003 including; Freedom FM, RTA and Canal 2. Magic FM was also banned in March 2003 for causing “offence to the head of state” but the ban was lifted later in the same month. **[14a] [14b][14e][15a][15c][15d][24c][33d]**

**6.24** According to Reporters without Borders, the situation concerning Cameroon’s press freedom seriously deteriorated during the first few months of 2003. **[24b]** In April

2003, the editor of "Mutations", Haman Mana was arrested for questioning and detained for several hours along with two of the newspapers printing foremen for reporting on the succession to President Biya. **[15c][24b][24c]**

**6.25** On 5 August 2003, the Yaoundé National Police arrested Rémy Ngono, who hosted a satirical programme on Radio Télévision Siantou (RTS), and jailed him in Kondengui central prison. Ngono's incarceration follows a year old court ruling against the journalist. He had been sentenced in absentia to six months' imprisonment with no parole for defamation. **[15b]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Freedom of Religion**

**6.26** The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and the Government generally respects this right in practice. There is no state religion. The sites and personnel of religious institutions are not exempt from the widespread human rights abuses committed by the security forces, however, in 2002, there were fewer reports of these abuses than in previous years. Muslim centres and Christian churches of various denominations operate freely throughout the country. Approximately 40 percent of the population are at least nominally Christian. About 20 percent are at least nominally Muslim and about 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions or no religion. Of the Christians, approximately half are Roman Catholics and about half are affiliated with Protestant denominations. Missionaries are present throughout the country and operate without any impediment. These missionary groups are from the Catholic, Muslim, Baha'i, Baptist, Presbyterian, Evangelic and the New Church of God faiths. **[2b]**

**6.27** In general, the Law on Religious Congregations governs relations between the Government and religious groups. Religious groups have to be approved and registered with the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) 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. In order to register, a religious group has to submit a file to the MINAT. 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. The approval process usually takes several years due mainly to administrative delays. **[2b]**

**6.28** The only religious groups known to be registered are Christian and Muslim groups and the Baha'i faith but other groups may be registered. According to MINAT statistics released in April 2002, there are 38 officially registered denominations, most of which are Christian. There are also numerous unregistered small religious groups that operate illegally but freely. 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. **[2b]**

**6.29** Christians are concentrated mainly in the southern and western provinces. The

two anglophone provinces of the western regions are largely Protestant and the Francophone provinces of the southern and western regions are largely Roman Catholic. Muslims are concentrated mainly in the northern provinces where the locally dominant Fulani (or Peuhl) ethnic group is mostly Muslim. Other ethnic groups known collectively as the Kirdi generally practice some form of Islam. The Bamoun ethnic group of the western provinces is also largely Muslim. Traditional indigenous religions are practised in rural areas throughout the country but rarely are practised publicly in the cities, in part because many such religions are intrinsically local in character. **[2b]**

**6.30** Relations between the various religious groups are generally amicable, however, some religious groups faced societal pressures and discrimination within their 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. No specific incidents or violence stemming from religious discrimination have been reported. 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 practised 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. The slavery still practised in parts of the north is reported to be largely enslavement of Kirdi by Fulani. **[2b]**

[Return to Contents](#)

### **The Practice of Witchcraft**

**6.31** 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. **[2b]**

[Return to Contents](#)

### **Freedom of Assembly and Political Association**

**6.32** 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. 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. Consequently, the Government often has not granted permits for assemblies organised by persons or groups critical of the Government and repeatedly used force to suppress public assemblies for which it has not issued permits. **[2a]**

**6.33** The law provides for freedom of political association and the Government generally respects this right in practice. The conditions for government recognition of a political party, a prerequisite for many political activities, were not onerous. More than 150 political parties operated legally, together with a large and growing number of civic

## **Political Activism - The Social Democratic Front Party (SDF)**

**6.34** 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 [23]. The SDF was formed in May 1990 as an opposition party to the ruling RDPC. 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. The SDF has seats in parliament and also runs local councils. [22][27d]

**6.35** 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. [23]

**6.36** Key members of the Social Democratic Front Party left the party in July 2002 to form a new political party called the Alliances des forces Progressistes or AFP (Alliance of Progressive Forces). They decided to form their own party citing the autocratic management of the SDF leader – John Fru Ndi. The founding members of the party are Maidadi Saidou Yaya, the former deputy chairman; Evariste Okusi Foto, the national secretary in charge of communications; Samuel Swinko, a founding member and Yves Epata, a member of the National Executive Committee. The founders of the AFP want to use the 30 June elections, marked by a low turnout, to encourage Cameroonians to take an interest in politics. They want to achieve that through the introduction of genuine political debate and call on all Cameroonians of goodwill to join them. [26]

**6.37** 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 [22].

**3.38** 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

**3.39** 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. [22]

**3.40** 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 [23].

**3.41** 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 [23]

[Return to Contents](#)

### **Political Activism - The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC)**

**6.42** 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. [2a] The SCNC's motto is - "the force of argument, not the argument of force". 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 strongholds are 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 Cameroon's Youth League. [23]

**6.43** According to Amnesty International, members of the SCNC were arrested and detained without charge and continued to be subjected to torture and cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. [5a] The Government imposed a ban on SCNC activities from 28 September to 10 October 2002 in the Northwest and Southwest Provinces. [2a] On 28 September, Albert Mukong, former executive director of the Human Rights Defence Group, was arrested by gendarmerie and detained until 22 October 2002. Mukong was accused, along with seven members of the SCNC, of taking part in illegal meetings, disturbing public order, banditry and separatism. [5a] In June 2003, 50 members of the SCNC including the chairman, Nfor Ngala Nfor, were arrested for planning to organise a meeting at Mouyouka. [33d] Eleven members of the SCNC were detained for a few hours in the Northwest during August 2003 for trying to organise a political tour for their new President, Chief Ette Otun Ayamba. [33b]

[Return to Contents](#)

### **Employment Rights**

**6.44** The 1992 Labour Code allows workers to form and join trade unions of their choosing, however, it imposes numerous restrictions. The law requires that unions register with the Government, permitting groups of at least 20 workers to organise a union by submitting a constitution, internal regulations, and non-conviction certifications for each founding member. For unions in the private sector, the Government requires registration with the Ministry of Employment. Unions for public sector workers must register with the Ministry of Territorial Administration. The law does not permit the creation of a union that includes both public and private sector workers. [2a]

**6.45** 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. [2a]

**6.46** The law 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. [2a]

**6.47** 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 practised 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. [2a]

[Return to Contents](#)

## People Trafficking

**6.48** 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. In 2000, the Government signed but has not yet ratified the United Nations-sponsored protocol concerning trafficking in persons. [2a]

**6.49** An International Labour Organisation study in March and April 2000 in Yaoundé, Douala and Bamenda, revealed that trafficking accounted for 84 percent 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. [2a]

**6.50** The Government has criticised the practice of trafficking in persons and the Ministry of Employment is responsible for fighting trafficking. The Ministry is seriously under funded, 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 trafficking and has developed a programme to find and return trafficked children. [2a]

## Freedom of Movement

**6.51** 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. **[2a][23]**

**6.52** All foreign nationals require passports and return tickets to enter Cameroon and passports should be valid for at least six months upon arrival in the country. Foreign nationals also need visas to enter Cameroon unless they are nationals of the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. These visas act as temporary entry permits. Exit permits are needed by all foreign nationals wishing to leave Cameroon. Airport visas are generally available to nationals of countries without diplomatic relations with Cameroon. **[9]**

**6.53** The import of foreign currency is unlimited but the amount of foreign currency must be declared. The import of local currency is also unlimited but export of local currency is limited to CFA 20,000 without official authorisation. Pornographic material, illegal drugs, weapons and ammunition are not allowed to be brought into Cameroon. Alcohol and other spirits should be brought into the country separately. An invoice must accompany all furniture and electrical appliances to prove that they are more than six months old. Newer items are subject to customs duties and taxes. **[9]**

**6.54** The police do frequently stop travellers to check identification documents, vehicle registrations and tax receipts for security and immigration control purposes. During 2002 and 2003, security forces injured persons they thought were evading checkpoints. For example, on 10 April 2002, a gendarme shot 32-year-old Francis Akondi Ndanle, a Bamenda, North West Province, taxi driver that he thought was trying to evade a checkpoint. Although the gendarme was not arrested, the North West Gendarmerie Legion conducted an investigation, the results of which are unknown. **[2a]** In July 2003, a taxi driver was killed by a policeman in Douala. The taxi driver drove through a checkpoint with out stopping and the policeman threw a block of wood at him, knocking the taxi driver on the head a killing him. A violent protest followed in Douala where at least three people were killed and about 50 injured. **[24e][24f]** Roadblocks and checkpoints manned by security forces have proliferated in cities and most highways making road travel both time-consuming and costly, since extortion of small bribes is commonplace at these checkpoints. **[2a]**

## Treatment of Refugees

**6.55** 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. The Government provides first asylum to persons who arrive at the border without documentation but who could show a valid claim to refugee status. The Government accepts for resettlement refugees who are granted refugee status by the UNHCR. There have been no confirmed reports of the forced returns of persons to a country where they feared persecution. **[2a]**

**6.56** More than 20,000 Nigerian refugees fled to Cameroon during 2002, joining

thousands already there. While some 8,000 Nigerian refugees spontaneously repatriated during the year, approximately 15,000 remained in Cameroon at the end of 2002. The Cameroonian Red Cross initially provided Nigerian refugees with limited humanitarian assistance. [27a]

**6.57** Civil war and insurrections in Chad pushed waves of Chadian refugees into Cameroon during the 1970s and 1980s. In recent years safer conditions in Chad have prompted Chadian refugees to depart Cameroon and return home. Most of the estimated 30,000 Chadians who remained in Cameroon at the end of 2002 appeared increasingly unlikely to repatriate because they had already integrated into local communities and were self-sufficient. [27a]

**6.58** About 2,000 refugees from various other African countries resided in Cameroon during 2002. Most lived in the capital, Yaoundé, and received limited humanitarian assistance. [27a]

**6.59** Although the UNHCR closed its office in Cameroon at the end of 2001, the agency temporarily re-established its presence and began providing assistance to refugees in September 2002. [2a][27a]

[Return to Contents](#)

## **6.B. HUMAN RIGHTS: SPECIFIC GROUPS**

### **Ethnic Groups**

**6.60** Cameroon's population of 15.7 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 RDC 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 Northwest and Southwest Provinces, have tended to support opposition party SDF and have suffered disproportionately from human rights violations committed by the Government and its security forces. The Anglophone community was largely underrepresented in the public sector. [2a]

**6.61** 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 practised 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 practised 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. [2a]

**6.62** 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 have been repeatedly announced by government officials. [2a]

### **Indigenous Persons**

**6.63** 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. While no legal discrimination exists, other ethnic groups often treat the Pygmies as inferior and sometimes subject them to unfair and exploitative labour practices. An estimated 95 percent of Baka do not have national identity cards; most Baka could not afford to provide the necessary documentation in order to obtain national identity cards, which were required to vote in national elections. There have been reports of pygmies complaining that the forests that they inhabit are being logged without fair compensation. [2a][14g]

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Women**

### **Violence against Women**

**6.64** 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. [2a]

[Return to Contents](#)

### **Position in Society and Discrimination**

**6.65** 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. [2a]

**6.66** 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. Marriage at the very young ages of eight and nine still occurs in certain tribes (in Adamaoua and the Northwest, and in the extreme north). Law and tradition allows polygamy 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. **[2a][20c][27c][31]**

**6.67** 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. **[2a][20c][31]**

**6.68** Another problem facing women is forced marriage; in some regions, in particular northern and rural areas, 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. Since a price had been paid, the girl was considered the property of the husband. 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. **[2a][20c][27c][31]**

**6.69** Women also suffer from discrimination in access to education. The gap in school attendance rates between boys and girls is 14 percent nationally and 34 percent in the two most northern provinces. This problem, which is especially acute in rural areas, results in higher levels of illiteracy among women than among men. **[2a][31]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

**6.70** Female genital mutilation (FGM) is not practised widely. However, it continued to be practised in three of the 10 provinces, including some areas of Far North and South west and the North West Provinces. Internal migration contributed to the spread of FGM to different parts of the country. The majority of FGM procedures were clitorectomies; however, the severest form of FGM, infibulation, was performed in the Kajifu region of the Southwest Province. FGM usually was practised on infants and preadolescent girls between the ages of six and eight. **[2a][20c][30]** The Government has criticised the practice; however, no law prohibits FGM. Rights to physical integrity and health, guaranteed in the preamble to the Constitution, together with certain clauses of the penal code, may be applicable in terms of preventing FGM. The ALVF conducted a program in Maroua to assist female victims of FGM and their families and to educate local populations. **[2a][20c][31]**

## Children

**6.71** 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. **[1b]** Since parents must pay uniform and book fees for primary school and because tuition and other fees for secondary education remained more costly despite the elimination of tuition fees for public elementary schools, education is unaffordable for many children. **[2a]**

**6.72** 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. **[2a]**

**6.73** On 17 April 2001, President Biya signed the decree that ratified International Labour Organisation Convention 138 that sets the minimum age of 14 for the employment of children. 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 eight 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. **[2a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## Child Care Arrangements

**6.74** According to a World Organisation Against Torture report, the facilities for the alternative care of children deprived of their family environment are inadequate. **[30]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## Homosexuals

**6.75** Under Article 347 of the Cameroonian Penal Code, homosexuality is considered to be a criminal offence for both men and women. 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 of CFA 20,000 up to CFA 200,000 is incurred. **[18b][27b][29]** If the prohibited acts are carried out with a minor of 16 to 21 years of age, the penalties are doubled. **[27b]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **6.C. HUMAN RIGHTS: OTHER ISSUES**

### **Organised Crime and Corruption**

**6.76** 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. [23]

**6.77** 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. [23]

**6.78** Cameroon is divided for administrative purposes into provinces, divisions and sub-divisions. 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 sub-divisions. In each sub-division, the local division officer is the senior official and the local police and gendarmerie operate under his authority. [23]

**6.79** 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. [23]

[Return to Contents](#)

### **Treatment of Returned Failed Asylum Seekers**

**6.80** 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. [23]

[Return to Contents](#)

## **Treatment of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)**

**6.81** A number of domestic and international human rights groups operate without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. However, according to the US State Department report, government officials repeatedly impeded the effectiveness of human rights NGOs during 2002 by limiting access to prisoners, refusing to share information, and increasingly threatening and using violence against personnel of human rights NGOs. The activities of virtually all these groups are limited by a shortage of funds and trained personnel. [2a]

**6.82** 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 violators. [2a]

**6.83** 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 Yaoundé 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. [20a]

[Return to Contents](#)

**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.  
**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 Camerounais, (RDPC) - Cameroon People's 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 timetable for multi-party elections.

**May 1991** - The University of Yaoundé is closed following the suppression of student demonstrations. seven 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 seven 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 winning approximately 55 percent of the local government areas.

**16 January 1996** - The government lifts press censorship.

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

**3 August 1997** - Re-run of elections in seven 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 three main opposition parties. Biya wins 92.6 percent of the vote.

**5 November 1997** - Biya sworn in as President for a seven 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.

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

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

**January 2001** - 21<sup>st</sup> Franco/African Summit held in Yaoundé.

**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.

**June 2002** - Municipal and legislative elections held concurrently. The RDPC won 133 seats; the SDF won 21 seats; the UDC won five seats; the UPC won three seats and the UNDP won one seat. The results of the legislative election in 17 constituencies were cancelled.

**September 2002** - Legislative elections re-run in 17 constituencies. The RDPC won 16 seats giving it a total of 149 seats in the National Assembly and the SDF won one seat giving it a total of 22 seats in the National Assembly.

**October 2002** - ICJ judgement rules that the Bakassi peninsula is part of Cameroonian national territory. This is accepted by the Cameroonian Government and the Nigerian Government.

**February 2003** - The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission met.

**March 2003** - Magic FM was banned for causing "offence to the head of state", the ban was lifted the same month.

**April 2003** - The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission met. The editor of "Mutations", Haman Mana was arrested for questioning and detained for several hours along with

two of the newspaper's printing foremen for reporting on the succession to President Biya.

**June 2003** - The Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission met. 50 members of the SCNC including the chairman, Nfor Ngala Nfor, were arrested for planning to organise a meeting at Mouyouka.

**August 2003** – Adamu Ndam Njoya of the Cameroon Democratic Union (CDU) and Ni John Fru Ndi of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) signed a joint declaration aimed towards presenting a single opposition candidate for the presidential elections proposed for 2004.

[Return to Contents](#)

**MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES [1b]**

**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 six 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. Formed in 1992

**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 Yaoundé

**Parti des Démocrates Camerounais (PDC)**

Based in Yaoundé. Leader: Louis-Tobie Mbida. Formed in 1991

**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)**

Based in Douala, Leader – Nsame Mbongo Joseph. Formed in 1991

**Parti Socialiste Démocratique du Cameroun (PSDC)**

Leader - Jean Michel Tekam

### **Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (RDPC)**

English translation: Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM). Based in Yaoundé. Ruling party. Leader - President Paul Biya. Secretary General - Joseph-Charles Doumba. Formed in 1966 as Union Nationale Camerounaise. Adopted present name in 1985. Sole legal party from 1972 to 1990

### **Rassemblement Democratique du Peuple sans Frontieres (RPDF)**

Formed in 1997

### **Social Democratic Front (SDF)**

Based in Bamenda. The SDF is the largest opposition political party in Cameroon. Leader - John Fru Ndi. Secretary General – Professor Tazoacha Asonganyi. Formed in 1990

### **The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC)**

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. Leader - Chief Ette Otun Ayamba

### **Social Democratic Movement (SDM)**

Breakaway faction of the SDF. Leader - Siga Asanga. Formed in 1995

### **Union Démocratique du Cameroun (UDC)**

Based in Yaoundé. Leader - Adamou Ndam Njoya. Formed in 1991

### **Union des Forces Démocratiques du Cameroun (UFDC)**

Based in Yaoundé. Leader - Victorin Hameni Bieleu. Formed in 1991

### **Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (UNDP)**

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

### **Union des Populations Camerounaises (UPC)**

Based in Douala. 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

[Return to Contents](#)

**Cameroon October 2003**

**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.

**Chief Ette Otun Ayamba**

Leader of the SCNC. Ayamba has been arrested several times.

**Paul Biya**

Currently the President of Cameroon. Leader of the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (Rassemblement Democratique du peuple Camerounais, (RDPC) Francophone politician. 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 multi-party elections. He retained the presidency in the presidential election on 12 October 1997 and was sworn in for a further seven years.

**John Fru Ndi**

Leader of the Social Democratic Front (SDF). Anglophone politician.

**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**

Current Prime Minister. Appointed Prime Minister in September 1996 and re-appointed as Prime Minister on 7 December 1997.

[Return to Contents](#)

## Election Results

The results of the Presidential election (1997) and the General Election (2002) are as follows:

### Presidential Election: 12 October 1997

Candidate	Number of Votes	Percent of Votes
Paul Biya (RDPC)	3,167,820	92.57
Henri Hogbe Ndlend (UPC)	85,693	2.5
Samuel Eboua (MDP)	83,506	2.44
Albert Dzongang (PPD)	40,814	1.19
Joachim Tabi Owono (AMEC)	15,817	0.46
Antoine Demannu (RDPF)	15,490	0.45
Gustave Essaka (DIC)	12,915	0.38
<b>Total*</b>	<b>3,422,055</b>	<b>100</b>

\*Excluding invalid votes.

### General Election: 30 June 2002

#### (National Assembly)

Party	Seats
Rassemblement Démocratique du peuple Camerounais (RDPC) / Cameroons People's Democratic Movement (CPDM)	149
Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (Rassemblement Démocratique du peuple Camerounais,	
Social Democratic Front .Front Social Démocratique (SDF)	22
Union Démocratique du Cameroun (UDC)	5
Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC)	3
Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (UNDP)	1

<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>
--------------	------------

**[1a][1b][34]**

## The Government

### Head of State

**President** Paul Biya (RDPC)

### Cabinet

**Prime Minister** Peter Mafay Musonge (RDPC)

### Ministers of State

**Minister of State and Secretary-General of the Presidency:** Jean-Marie Atangana Mebara (RDPC)

**Minister of State in charge of Territorial Administration / Interior:** Marafa Hamidou Yaya (RDPC)

**Minister of State in Charge of Justice and Keeper of the Seals:** Ali Amadou

**Minister of State in charge of Foreign Affairs:** Francois-Xavier N'Goubeyou (RDPC):

**Minister of State in charge of Culture:** Ferdinand Leopold Oyono

**Minister of State in charge of Industrial and Commercial Development:** Bello Bouba Maigari (UNDP)

**Minister of State in charge of Agriculture:** Augustin Frederick Kodock

### Ministers

**Minister of Finance:** Michel Meva'a M'Eboutou (RDPC)

**Minister of Economic Affairs, Planning and Land Management:** Martin Aristide Okouda (RDPC)

**Minister of National Education:** Joseph Owona (RDPC)

**Minister of Parliamentary Relations:** Gregoire Owona (RDPC)

**Minister of Science and Technology:** Zacharie Perevet

<b>Minister of Youth and Sports:</b>	Bidoung Mkpatt (RDPC)
<b>Minister of Public Health:</b>	Urbain Olanguena Awono (RDPC)
<b>Minister of Technical and Professional Training:</b>	Louis Bapes Bapes
<b>Minister of Environment and Forests:</b>	Tanyi Mbianyor Oben
<b>Minister of Housing:</b>	Adji Abdoulaye Haman
<b>Minister of Town Planning:</b>	Lekene Donfack
<b>Minister of Higher Education:</b>	Maurice Tchuenta
<b>Minister of Tourism:</b>	Pierre Hele (RDPC)
<b>Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reform:</b>	Rene Ze Nguele (RDPC)
<b>Minister of Communication:</b>	Jacques Fame Ndongo (RDPC)
<b>Minister of Social Affairs:</b>	Cecile Bomba Nkolo (f)
<b>Minister of Women's Affairs</b>	Catherine Bakang Mbock (f) (RDPC)
<b>Minister of Public Works:</b>	Dieudonne Ambassa Zang
<b>Minister of Transport:</b>	Ndeh John Begheni
<b>Minister of Employment:</b>	Robert Nkili
<b>Minister of Mines, Water and Energy:</b>	Joseph Aoudou
<b>Minister of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries:</b>	Hamadjoda Ajoudji (RDPC)
<b>Minister of Posts and Telecommunications:</b>	Maximin Koue Kongo (RDPC)

## **Provisions of the Constitution**

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 the 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 **[3]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## The Cameroonian Nationality Code

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.

The following documents should be enclosed with the application:

- the curriculum vitae of the applicant
- a copy of his birth certificate
- a copy of his marriage certificate or civil status booklet, where applicable
- copies of the birth certificates of his minor, unmarried children
- where applicable, any document allowing it to be determined in full knowledge of the facts that the measure requested is justified from a national point of view

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.

A foreigner who has acquired Cameroonian nationality may forfeit it by decree if he has:

- been convicted of an act defined as a criminal act or an offence against the internal or external security of the state
- committed acts harmful to the interests of the state **[4]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## Human Rights Organisations

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 Cameroon National Association for Family Welfare
- Tribes Without Frontiers
- The Association for the Promotion of Communal Initiatives and the League for Rights and Freedoms. **[2a]**

[Return to Contents](#)

## **References to Source Material**

1. **Europa Publications Ltd.**  
[1a] Europa World Yearbook 2003 (43rd edition): Cameroon, p. 957 - 974  
[1b] Africa: South of the Sahara 2003 (32nd edition): Cameroon, p. 149 – 172
2. **US Department of State**  
www.state.gov  
[2a] Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2002: 31 March 2003  
[2b] International Religious Freedom Report 7 October 2002  
[2c] Background Note: Cameroon Profile December 2001
3. **Constitution Finder**  
<http://confinder.richmond.edu/>  
Cameroon Constitution of 1972 with 1996 revisions
4. **The 1968 Cameroonian Nationality Code**
5. **Amnesty International**  
www.web.amnesty.org  
[5a] Annual Report 2003  
[5b] Cameroon: Human rights defender and political activists arrested and held in prison, 25 October 2002
6. **Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)**  
Country Profiles: Cameroon, Last updated 11 June 2003
7. **War Resisters' International**  
'Refusing to Bear Arms' 1998, p.71
8. **United Nations Economic and Social Council**  
Civil and Political Rights, Including Questions of Torture and Detention, 11 November 1999 (without annexes which are in French)
9. **Quest Economics Database**  
Cameroon Country Profile, 26 September 2002
10. **Ethnologue - Languages of the World**  
www.ethnologue.com  
[10a] Ethnologue Report for Cameroon (14<sup>th</sup> edition, January 2003)  
[10b] Ethnologue Map for Cameroon, accessed 26 August 2003
11. **CIA World Fact book**  
Cameroon Country Report, Last updated 1 August 2003

12. **Canadian IRB**  
"The Socialist Chronicle, a weekly newspaper, and The Herald, a national daily; their relationship with the government; and whether a certain individual worked as a journalist at The Herald in 1997 and as deputy-editor of The Socialist Chronicle in 2000-2001", Index CMR41419.E, 25 April 2003
13. **Child Soldiers Campaign**  
Cameroon report, accessed 26 August 2003
14. **UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN)**
  - [14a] Government closes Freedom FM radio station, 27 May 2003
  - [14b] Government closes two private TV stations, 18 March 2003
  - [14c] Ruling party wins majority in re-run, 18 September 2002
  - [14d] Government launches Anti-HIV/AIDS Programme, (via allAfrica.com), 26 March 2002
  - [14e] Private radio station closed, (via all Africa.com), 19 March 2003
  - [14f] President announces decentralisation project, 2 January 2003
  - [14g] Countries urged to extend citizenship rights to "forgotten" Pygmies, 13 August 2003
15. **Reporters without Borders**
  - [15a] Cameroon Annual Report 2003, 2 May 2003
  - [15b] A journalist imprisoned one year after being sentenced in absentia, 6 August 2003
  - [15c] Editor of Mutations arrested for speculating on succession to President Biya, 15 April 2003
  - [15d] Minister bans new radio station from starting up, 27 May 2003
16. **Reuters News Service**
  - [16a] Cameroon ends State broadcasting monopoly, 4 April 2000
  - [16b] Cameroon set to name members of an elections observatory, 11 October 2001
  - [16c] President appoints National Elections Observatory members, 11 October 2001
17. **Panafrican News Agency (PANA)**
  - [17a] World Bank releases 50 million dollars for AIDS patients, (Via all Africa.com), 16 February 2001
  - [17b] Prices of anti-retroviral drugs drop in Cameroon, 3 August 2002
18. **British High Commission (Yaoundé)**
  - [18a] Letter about military service in Cameroon, dated 27 July 2001
  - [18b] Positions of homosexuals in Cameroon, dated 26 September 2001
  - [18c] Tuberculosis – Cameroon, Advice 2 October 2003
  - [18d] Treatment of Mental Illness – Cameroon, Advice 2 October 2003
  - [18e] Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon, Advice 2 October 2003
19. **British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)**

www.bbc.co.uk

[19a] Cameroon awarded oil rich Bakassi, 10 October 2002

[19b] Nigeria accepts loss of Bakassi, 10 October 2002

[19c] Nigeria accepts Bakassi ruling, 13 November 2002

[19d] Timeline: Cameroon, 8 July 2003

**20. Africa Online (News Database)**

www.afrol.com

[20a] Cameroonian rights activist targeted, 18 January 2002

[20b] Cameroon, Nigeria meet on Bakassi dispute, 13 June 2003

**21. Newswatch (Lagos)**

Going nowhere, (via allAfrica.com), 28 October 2002

**22. Social Democratic Front**

www.sdfparty.org

Information, accessed 3 October 2001

**23. Danish Immigration Service**

Fact-finding mission report on Cameroon in January - February 2001

**24. LexisNexis**

[24a] People in power: Cameroon, 16 July 2003

[24b] State printing house refuses to publish "Mutations" newspaper, 18 April 2003

[24c] CJP deplors worsening press freedom climate, BBC Monitoring International Reports, 20 June 2003

[24d] World Bank to the rescue of Cameroonian HIV carriers, Panafrican News Agency, 9 July 2003

[24e] At least three killed in Cameroon violence, Agence France Presse, 9 July 2003

[24f] Two taxi drivers killed in Cameroon violence, Agence France Presse, 9 July 2003

[24g] Cameroon; Fifth session opens today, Cameroon Tribune, 5 August 2003

**25. CRTV radio**

Ruling party sweeps 16 out of 17 seats in 15 September re run polls, Text of report in English by Cameroon CRTV radio on 17 September 2002, (via BBC Monitoring International Reports), 18 September 2002

**26. Radio France Internationale (Paris)**

Social Democratic Front dissents form new political party, Text report by Radio France Internationale on 14 August 2002, (via BBC Monitoring International Reports), 14 August 2002

**27. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

[27a] U.S. Committee for Refugees World Refugee Survey 2003 – Cameroon, June 2003

[27b] Information on Treatment of Homosexuals – November 2002, US

Immigration and Naturalization Services, accessed 17 September 2003

[27c] Information on Forced or Arranged Marriage – October 2002, US Immigration and Naturalization Services, accessed 17 September 2003

[27d] Information on Ambozonia, Cameroon Democratic Party, Social Democratic Front (SDF), and Anti-Gang [Brigade] – December 2002, US Immigration and Naturalization Services, accessed 17 September 2003

[27e] Information on rape of Anglophone Women – October 2002, US Immigration and Naturalization Services, accessed 17 September 2003

**28. Cameroon Tribune**

[28a] Commentary: Divergence, (via allAfrica.com), 21 August 2003

[28b] SDF, CDU Agree on Single Candidate, (via allAfrica.com), 21 August 2003

**29. Behind the Mask**

<http://www.mask.org.za/index2.html>

Cameroon Report, accessed 3 September 2003

**30. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)**

Rights of the Child in the Republic of Cameroon, (via UN Wire), August 2001, released 26 June 2003

**31. Centre for Reproductive Rights**

[www.reproductiverights.org](http://www.reproductiverights.org)

Cameroon Report, accessed 10 September 2003

**32. AllAfrica**

[www.allafrica.com](http://www.allafrica.com)

[32a] Gendarmes schooled on Humanitarian Laws, Cameroon Tribune, 2 September 2003

[32b] Seven Steps to Completion Point, Cameroon Tribune, 15 September 2003

[32c] Rigorous Budgeting, Cameroon Tribune, 15 September 2003

**33. BBC Monitoring**

[33a] Cameroon, Nigeria teams meet over implementation of Bakassi verdict, Mutations, 6 February 2003

[33b] Police detain 11 “secessionists” on tour in north-western region, AFP, 2 September 2003

[33c] Editorial says there is little hope for single opposition candidate, La Nouvelle Expression, 25 August 2003

[33d] Secessionists released from detention, Gaboness Africa, 8 June 2003

[33e] Communication minister lifts ban on Magic FM, bans two TV stations, Radio Television Siantou, 20 March 2003

**34. Elections around the world**

[www.electionworld.org](http://www.electionworld.org)

Elections in Cameroon, version 24 August 2003

**35. International Monetary Fund (IMF)**

IMF Welcomes Cameroon’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Press Release

No. 03/137, 4 August 2003

[Return to Contents](#)

**Cameroon October 2003**