

# CAMEROON ASSESSMENT

April 2000

Country Information and Policy Unit

## CONTENTS

<u>I SCOPE OF DOCUMENT</u>	1.1 - 1.5
<u>II GEOGRAPHY</u>	2.1 - 2.3
<u>III HISTORY</u>	
<u>Recent Political History</u>	3.1 - 3.18
<u>Economy</u>	3.19 - 3.23
<u>IV INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE</u>	
<u>Government</u>	4.1 - 4.9
<u>Security</u>	4.10 - 4.13
<u>Judiciary</u>	4.14 - 4.19
<u>V HUMAN RIGHTS: GENERAL SITUATION</u>	
<u>General Human Rights</u>	5.1 - 5.9
<u>Human Rights Monitoring</u>	5.10 - 5.14
<u>Refugees</u>	5.15 - 5.16
<u>VI HUMAN RIGHTS: SPECIFIC ISSUES</u>	
<u>Freedom of Assembly and Association</u>	6.1 - 6.3
<u>Freedom of Speech and of the Press</u>	6.4 - 6.7
<u>Freedom of Religion</u>	6.8 - 6.11
<u>Minorities and Ethnic Groups</u>	6.12 - 6.19
<u>Women</u>	6.20 - 6.24
<u>Children</u>	6.25 - 6.28
<u>Freedom to Travel</u>	6.29 - 6.31

<a href="#">ANNEX A: POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS</a>	Pages 18 - 21
<a href="#">ANNEX B: PROMINENT PEOPLE</a>	Pages 22
<a href="#">ANNEX C: CHRONOLOGY</a>	Pages 23 - 26
<a href="#">ANNEX D: BIBLIOGRAPHY</a>	Pages 27 - 29

## **I SCOPE OF DOCUMENT**

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

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

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

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

**1.5** This country assessment has been placed on the Internet in the Home Office website: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/cipu1.htm>. An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to:

Amnesty International UK

Immigration Advisory Service

Immigration Appellate Authority

Immigration Law Practitioners' Association

Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

JUSTICE

Medical Foundation for the care of Victims of Torture

Refugee Council

Refugee Legal Centre

UN High Commissioner for Refugees

## **II GEOGRAPHY**

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

**2.2** In mid-1995 the population was estimated to be 13,277,000. Population growth between 1985 and 1994 was at an average of 2.8% per year. The population is very unevenly distributed, and is concentrated in the west, the south-central region and the Sudan savannah zone of the north. Most of the towns are located in the south, including the capital, Yaoundé, with an estimated population in 1992 of 800,000. Also in the south is the main port of Douala, with a population estimated at 1,200,000. [2]

**2.3** There are over 200 tribes including the Bamiléké (in the west) and many local languages spoken, although the official languages are French and English. The North-West and South-West Provinces of Cameroon are Anglophone and constitute less than one tenth of the area with just over one fifth of the population. The Francophone areas are larger and more populous. The majority of the population is rural. [2][3]

## **III HISTORY**

### **Recent Political History**

**3.1** Following military occupation in 1919 the German protectorate of Kamerun was divided into British and French zones of influence. [1][2]

**3.2** In 1922, both zones became subject to mandates of the League of Nations (later converted to United Nations Trust Territories), with four-fifths of the territory being allocated to French administration and known as French Cameroun, and the remainder allocated to British administration which was known as the Northern and Southern Cameroons. [1][2]

**3.3** In 1957 French Cameroun became an autonomous state and in January 1960, following both domestic and international pressure for independence from France, the Republic of Cameroon was formed, with Ahmadou Ahidjo being elected as its first president. [1][2]

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

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

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

**3.7** 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 dismissed. Later that month Ahidjo resigned the chairmanship of the UNC and later left the country and remained in exile in France and Senegal until his death in November 1989. Biya was elected chairman of the UNC and in January 1984 he was re-elected as president. [1][2]

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

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

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

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

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

**3.13** In October 1991, Biya announced that legislative elections would take place in February 1992. These were later re-scheduled to 1 March 1992 but a number of parties, including the Social Democratic Front (SDF), refused to take part, claiming the elections were too early. The RDPC won 88 of the 180 seats contested and secured an absolute majority by forming an alliance with the Mouvement pour la Défense de la République (MDR). Presidential elections were subsequently held on 11 October 1992 and Biya was re-elected with 39.9% of the votes. John Fru Ndi, the leader of the SDF, and Bello Bouba Maigari, the leader of the UNDP, secured 35.9% and 19.2% of the votes respectively. John Fru Ndi disputed the official results, claiming that he had won. Demonstrations were staged by the opposition supporters, but the Supreme Court ruled against Fru Ndi's appeal that the results should be declared invalid. The unrest continued and Fru Ndi was placed under house arrest. [1][2]

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

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

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

**3.17** A student strike at the University of Yaoundé took place in May and June 1996 in which the students called for improved facilities and protested against the introduction of additional fees. The strike continued despite concessions by the authorities. In June 1996 several students were reportedly arrested and assaulted following violent confrontations between students and the security services and a vigilante group known as auto-défense, reportedly established by the university authorities to counter student unrest. A number of students were detained briefly and several were suspended from the university. [3][4]

**3.18** Municipal elections took place on 21 January 1996 and legislative and presidential elections were held on 17 May 1997 and 12 October 1997 respectively (refer to paragraphs 4.1 to 4.9)

### **Economy**

**3.19** Agriculture accounts for 25% of annual gross domestic product (GDP), with industry and the services sector representing 22% and 35% respectively. Cameroon is an oil producer, and its principal exports include timber, coffee, cocoa, cotton, bananas and rubber, although the government has banned the export of raw timber since January 1999, in line with commitments given to the Rio Earth Summit goals. Following the decline in the price of petroleum and other commodities in the mid 1980s the economy was in crisis for several years. In an effort to rectify the situation a series of austerity measures was introduced and a programme of economic restructuring was undertaken. This included the reduction in the salaries of public sector workers which in turn provoked a series of strikes. The CFA franc was devalued in 1994 since when the economic performance has improved, with GDP growth averaging more than 5% between 1996 and 1997. The CFA franc has been given a fixed parity against the euro, at 655.957 per euro. Cameroon's population of about 14 million has a per capita GNP of US \$650. [2][5][42][43][44]

**3.20** The government has considerable external debts. On 20 August 1997, it signed a stringent three-year structural adjustment agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The government has succeeded in implementing the first and second phases but the third and final phase has not yet been completed. In October 1997, Cameroon

agreed a debt relief initiative with Paris Club creditors and this was followed by some individual debt cancellation and re-scheduling agreements. [6][7]

**3.21** The IMF held a seminar in Yaounde in January 1999 entitled "The IMF and Africa: The Social Dimensions of Structural Adjustment and External Debt" for journalists and social workers, aimed at improving the poor image of the IMF which had resulted from the severe financial measures necessary to implement economic reform. [45]

**3.22** The government has announced it is to privatise the 100% state-owned bank BICEC (Banque Internationale du Cameroun pour l'Épargne et le Crédit). They have invited tenders for the bank, which was salvaged from the ruins of the BICIC bank when the Banque Nationale de Paris withdrew. [46]

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

## **IV INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE**

### **Government**

**4.1** Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency which has held presidential, municipal and legislative elections in the last five years. Since independence in 1960, a single party, now called the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), has remained in power and limited political choice. [43]

**4.2** Municipal elections took place on 21 January 1996 and were judged by international observers to be generally free and fair. The RDPC retained approximately 55% of the local government areas. Opposition parties, including the SDF and the UNDP, made important gains, notably in major towns. In many areas this was followed by the immediate appointment of government delegates who were given overall control of municipal councils. [2][3]

**4.3** Legislative elections were held on 17 May 1997. International and Commonwealth observers found the electoral process to be flawed. In particular, the Commonwealth Observer Group noted irregularities in voter registration and the distribution of polling cards to those presumed to be opposition supporters. The Commonwealth Observer Group also recommended the establishment of an impartial and autonomous institution such as an independent electoral commission. [8]

**4.4** On 6 June 1997 the Supreme Court announced that the ruling RDPC had obtained 109 seats, with the SDP and UNDP winning 43 seats and 13 seats respectively. The opposition parties called for the elections to be annulled because of irregularities and fraud. The Supreme Court however, annulled elections in seven constituencies only. Some known opposition leaders who demonstrated outside the Supreme Court were detained and charged with inciting revolt. They were released a week later and all

charges were dropped. Candidates of the RDPC gained the seats in a re-run of the elections in the seven constituencies held on 3 August 1997(\*). [2][5][9]

Legislative Elections: 17 May 1997

<b>PARTY</b>	<b>SEATS</b>
<i>Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais (RDPC)</i>	<i>109 (116*)</i>
<i>Social Democratic Front (SDF)</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>Union nationale pour la démocratie et le progrès (UNDP)</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>Union démocratique du Cameroun (UDC)</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Mouvement pour la défense de la République (MDR)</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Mouvement pour la jeunesse du Cameroun (MLJC)</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>Union des populations camerounaises (K) (UPC)(K)</i>	<i>1</i>
<b>Total*</b>	<b>180</b>

[2]

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

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

**4.7** The official result of the presidential poll gave Biya a landslide victory with 92.6% of the vote. He was sworn in for a further presidential term at a ceremony on 5 November 1997, which was boycotted by opposition parties. [5][14]

Presidential Election: 12 October 1997

<i>CANDIDATE</i>	<i>VOTES</i>	<i>% OF VOTES</i>
<i>Paul Biya (RDPC)</i>	<i>3,167,820</i>	<i>92.57</i>
<i>Henri Hogbe Nlend (UPC)</i>	<i>85,693</i>	<i>2.50</i>
<i>Samuel Eboua (MDP)</i>	<i>83,506</i>	<i>2.44</i>
<i>Albert Dzungang (PPD)</i>	<i>40,814</i>	<i>1.19</i>
<i>Joachim Tabi Owono (AMEC)</i>	<i>15,817</i>	<i>0.46</i>
<i>Antoine Demannu (RDPF)</i>	<i>15,490</i>	<i>0.45</i>
<i>Gustave Essaka (DIC)</i>	<i>12,915</i>	<i>0.38</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>3,422,055</i>	<i>100.00</i>

[1]

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

**4.9** In 1998 the SDF engaged in talks with the RDPC, however, it declined the invitation to join the government because the two sides remained divided over opposition calls for revised electoral laws and an independent electoral commission. Some influential members of the SDF's National Executive Committee have reportedly challenged Mr Fru Ndi's decision to discontinue talks with the RDPC. [7][15][16][17][18]

### Security

**4.10** Responsibility for security is shared by the national police, the National Intelligence Service (DGRE), the gendarmerie, the Ministry of Territorial Administration, military intelligence, the army, and the Presidential Security Service. The police and gendarmerie have dominant roles in enforcing internal security laws. The security forces are under the control of the President, the civilian Minister of Defence and the civilian head of police. [5][43]

**4.11** There is no national service in Cameroon. A plan to introduce it was made in 1989, but was not implemented. [19]

**4.12** In the north of Cameroon some traditional rulers have private militias which operate with tacit government approval. [4]

**4.13** Following a 1913 agreement which ceded the Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon, a long-running border dispute has ensued with Nigeria. Both Cameroon and Nigeria have deployed several thousand troops to the region, which is rich in oil reserves, and clashes have resulted in fatalities on both sides. Negotiations between the two countries have been ongoing for several years and despite calls from the Organisation of African Unity for the cessation of hostilities, clashes continued in 1998. On 24 November 1998 Nigeria and Cameroon exchanged 211 prisoners under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross. [2][20][21][22][23][24][25]

### **Judiciary**

**4.14** The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary. In practice it is prone to political influence, inefficiency 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 division. The court system is a subordinate of the Ministry of Justice and is strongly influenced by the French legal system. Certain aspects of Anglo-Saxon tradition, however, apply in Anglophone provinces. [5][26][43]

**4.15** 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. Accordingly, particular points of customary law differ depending upon the region and the ethnic group where a case is being tried. Customary courts may exercise jurisdiction only with the consent of both parties to a case; either party has the right to have any case heard by a national rather than a customary court and customary law is supposed to be valid only when it is not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience. Many citizens, however, are unaware of their rights under civil law and have been taught since birth that customary laws form the rules by which they must abide. Consequently, traditional courts remain important in rural areas and serve as an alternative for settling disputes. Their authority varies by region and ethnic group but they are often the arbiters of property and domestic disputes. [43]

**4.16** 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. There have been recent reports of military tribunals unfairly sentencing defendants with lengthy terms of imprisonment. [43][47]

**4.17** Corruption and inefficiency in the courts remain serious problems. Justice is frequently delayed or denied before reaching the trial stage. At trial, political bias often brings trials to a halt or results in an extremely long process, punctuated by extended court recesses. Powerful political or business interests appear to enjoy virtual immunity from prosecution; some politically sensitive cases are settled with a payoff and thus are never heard. [43]

**4.18** 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. [43]

**4.19** In 1995, the National Assembly passed amendments to the Constitution which provided, inter alia, for a judiciary independent of executive and legislative powers. President Biya indicated that action to establish this could be expected in 1998. The Supreme Court demonstrated some independence and a respect for the law when opposition parties, having been denied the right to contest some localities in the municipal elections in January 1996, brought cases against the government. The Supreme Court declared 18 of the election results to be null and void. [3][5][26]

## **V HUMAN RIGHTS: GENERAL SITUATION**

### **General Human Rights**

**5.1** According to the United States Department of State Reports for 1998 and 1999, the government's human rights record continued to be generally poor and government officials continued to commit numerous serious abuses. Despite this, and the provision in the Constitution that "under no circumstances shall any person be subjected to torture, to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment", prisons are severely overcrowded and prisoners are often denied access to sanitation facilities. The Penal Code also bans torture and renders any "evidence" obtained that way inadmissible in court. However, it is known that the security forces inflict beatings on prisoners. A recent United Nations report indicates that torture and ill-treatment is systematic and widespread in Cameroon's police and gendarmerie cells and in Cameroon's prisons. There are reliable reports that the "balancoire" torture technique is still in use in the interrogation of certain prisoners. In this technique, the prisoner, with his hands tied behind his back, is suspended from a rod and beaten. Also favoured is the "bastinade" in which the victim is beaten on the soles of the feet. [5][27][28][29][31][41][43][48][49][50][51]

**5.2** Prison conditions are harsh. Prisons are seriously overcrowded, unsanitary, inadequate, especially outside major urban areas. Serious deficiencies in food, health care and sanitation due to lack of funds are common in almost all prisons, including in "private prisons" in the north operated by traditional rulers. Prisoners are kept in dilapidated colonial-era prisons, where the number of detainees is four to five times the original capacity. Health and medical care is almost non-existent. Prisoners' families are expected to provide food for their relatives in prison. Prison officials torture, beat and otherwise abuse prisoners. Prisoners routinely die due to harsh prison conditions and inadequate medical treatment. In Doula's New Bell Prison, there were only seven water taps for a reported 2,300 prisoners. This prison was originally built to accommodate 600 inmates. A 1997 report on prison conditions indicated that Bertoua Prison, which was built to hold 50 inmates, housed over 700 persons. The Kondengui Central Prison in Yaounde, constructed in 1967 to hold 1,500 inmates, reportedly held more than twice that number in 1999. The government official in charge of prisons, reportedly said in June 1999, that the Central Prison of Bafoussam, built for 320 inmates held 3,140 persons.

Overcrowding is exacerbated by the large number of long pre-trial detentions. According to credible press reports, more than 1,400 of the inmates of Doula Prison were pre-trial detainees, whereas only 900 were convicted prisoners. [30][43][50][51]

**5.3** In the north of the country the government allows traditional chiefs (Lamibe) to operate private prisons outside the government penal system. The International Committee of the Red Cross has declined to visit any prisons since 1992 because the government has refused to guarantee it unrestricted access to all detention centres. The Cameroonian Red Cross and the National Human Rights Commission make frequent visits to prisons. [3][5]

**5.4** The Constitution also states that "no person may be prosecuted, arrested or detained except in the cases and according to the manner determined by law" and that "the law shall ensure the right of every person to a fair trial". Despite this, and the requirement of the Penal Code that detainees be brought before a magistrate promptly, arbitrary prolonged detention is still a problem (refer to paragraph 5.2). [5][26][28]

**5.5** A person may be detained in custody for a maximum of 72 hours before referral to a judicial authority to be charged or released, however, this limit is often exceeded. Legislation also allows administrative detention without charge for renewable periods of 15 days, ostensibly to combat banditry and maintain public order. It has reportedly been used in some cases to detain critics and opponents of the government. [4][5][28]

**5.6** The courts have punished some instances of arbitrary detention, notably the sentencing of six policemen (four in absentia) who had arrested, detained and beaten a deputy magistrate in 1994, to long custodial sentences and heavy fines. [3][5]

**5.7** Security forces continue to use excessive force and commit extrajudicial killings. However, the authorities do not condone such abuse of power and recent cases of such killings have been subject to official investigation. At the end of 1997, two cases were under investigation following the deaths of two detainees in Yaoundé prison in 1997. In one, a police commissioner and three colleagues were arrested pending trial. [3][5][50]

**5.8** In July 1998, a court convicted two police officers in connection with the death in custody in November 1997 of a man arrested for robbery. He died in the commissariat in Yaoundé, having been tortured to extract a confession. The court sentenced a police inspector and commissioner responsible for the unit to ten years' and six years' imprisonment respectively, together with a fine of 15m CFA francs in damages for the family of the deceased. [31]

**5.9** There are no confirmed reports of political killings. The security forces continue to use excessive, lethal force against private citizens and committed numerous extrajudicial killings. [43]

### **Human Rights Monitoring**

**5.10** Domestic and international human rights groups generally have considerable freedom to operate in Cameroon. A large number of independent human rights monitoring groups exist in the country. The government has, on occasion, withheld official recognition of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). [5]

**5.11** Human rights NGOs have issued press releases and reports detailing specific human rights violations and many have held seminars and workshops on various aspects of human rights. [5]

**5.12** The governmental National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms has also conducted investigations into alleged human rights abuses and organised several human rights seminars aimed at judicial officials, security personnel and other government officers. Its reports have been submitted to the prime minister and president, but have never been published or released. [5]

**5.13** In February 1996 Cameroon hosted the first conference of African National Human Rights Institutions with a view to strengthening co-operation between national human rights organisations. The government has also requested that the UN Human Rights Commission establish an office in Yaoundé. [3]

**5.14** Amnesty International is represented in Cameroon.[28]

### **Refugees**

**5.15** 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 can show a valid claim to refugee status. [43]

**5.16** The UNHCR estimated that in 1999, there were around 47,000 refugees in the country for whom Cameroon was a country of first asylum. The majority of these persons are Chadians, whose total number was estimated to be more than 41,000. The remainder were principally from Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with small numbers from Liberia, Sudan and Ethiopia. The government accepts for resettlement refugees who are granted refugee status by the UNHCR. [43]

## **VI HUMAN RIGHTS: SPECIFIC ISSUES**

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

**6.1** Until 1990 Cameroon had been a one-party state. However, in 1990, following continued pressure and civil unrest, President Biya announced the intention to adopt a multi-party system, a reform in laws governing subversion and a reform of legislation which prohibited political association. In December 1990 the National Assembly approved a constitutional amendment which provided for the establishment of a multi-party system. The amendments required the government to grant or refuse registration within three months to any political organisation seeking recognition. In addition, recognised parties would receive support from the state during election campaigns. The financing of political parties from external sources was however, prohibited, as was the recruitment of party activists on a regional or ethnic basis. There are reported to be in excess of 140 political parties operating legally in Cameroon (a number of which are listed in Annex A). [2][5]

**6.2** Political party support from the early 1990s has tended to be defined along regional and sometimes ethnic lines. The SDF draws its primary support from the West Province, where the Bamiléké are from, and the Anglophone North-West Province. The UNDP is strong in the three mainly Northern provinces, while the RDPC traditionally has been strong in the Centre and South provinces, where the Beti ethnic group is based. [32]

**6.3** The law provides for freedom of assembly but government approval needs to be sought to hold public meetings, demonstrations or processions. The government will withhold approval on public order grounds and this was the reason given for banning an opposition rally in Yaoundé in October 1997 prior to the presidential election. In the run-up to the elections in 1997, Article 19 reports interference with opposition party campaigns and meetings in some areas in Cameroon. [2][5][11][32][43]

### **Freedom of Speech and of the Press**

**6.4** The Constitution provides for freedom of expression and of the press but the government continues to impose limits on these rights. The Penal Code's libel laws specify that defamation, abuse, contempt and dissemination of false news are offences punishable by prison terms and heavy fines. These statutes sometimes are invoked by the government to silence criticism of the government and government officials. [5][26][43][33]

**6.5** In 1996, the government repealed the law that had authorised the government both to censor private publications and extra-judicially to seize publications that are considered to be dangerous to public order or suspend newspapers' publication licences. Since 1997, formal censorship has ceased. In addition, seizures of print runs of private newspapers or interfered with private newspaper distribution during 1999. The government also did not suspend or revoke the publication licences of any newspapers during the year. Security forces, however, continue to frequently restrict press freedom by harassing or abusing private print media journalists. [43]

**6.6** Legal provisions make defamation a criminal offence. The Cameroon Penal Code specifies that defamation, abuse, insult and the dissemination of false news are punishable by prison terms of up to five years and heavy fines. In a recent and highly publicised case, Pius Njawé, the editor and publisher of the independent newspaper, *Le Messenger*, was detained on 24 December 1997 and charged with publishing false information concerning the health of the president. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment and a fine of £500. Njawé appealed, and on 14 April 1998 the Court of Appeal reduced his sentence to one year's imprisonment and a fine of £300. The sentence was confirmed by the Supreme Court on 17 September, however, Njawé was granted a presidential pardon and released from prison on 12 October 1998. In another case, Phillip Afuson Njaro a journalist for the English language paper *The Herald*, was arrested and severely beaten by police in Ekondo Titi allegedly because he wrote about the corrupt practices of the local police chief. [4][5][34][35][36][37][38][39][43]

**6.7** In 1990 and again in 1995, laws were enacted that provided for the licensing of private radio and television stations but these regulations were not implemented in either of those years. A government decree was passed on 3 April 2000 finally implementing the 1990 law on broadcasting allowing private companies to apply for a five-year radio or ten-year television licence. The decree states that programmes should reflect the plurality

of Cameroonian society. Programmes must not be pornographic, exploit children or morally corrupt them and should not incite violence. [43][53]

### **Freedom of Religion**

**6.8** Approximately 53% of the population follow the Christian faith (mainly Roman Catholic) and 22% are Muslims. The remainder adhere to traditional religious beliefs. The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, although religious groups must be registered with the Ministry of Territorial Administration in order to be legally recognised. There are no specific penalties, however, for religious groups which do not register with the government. The only religious groups that are known to be registered are Christian and Muslim groups and the Baha'i Faith. The government does not register traditional religious groups on the grounds that the practice of traditional religions is not public but private to members of a particular ethnic or kinship group, or to the residents of a particular locality. [2][3][5][43]

**6.9** Government officials criticised and questioned criticisms of the government by religious institutions and leaders but there have been no reports that government officials have used force to suppress such criticism. [43]

**6.10** 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. [43]

**6.11** From 1970 to 1990 the Jehovah's Witnesses were banned in Cameroon. Since then they have remained legal. [19]

### **Minorities and Ethnic Groups**

**6.12** Cameroon is a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Constitution ensures the protection of minorities and preserves the rights of indigenous populations. Furthermore, it mandates that "everyone has equal rights and obligations". Nevertheless, with more than 200 ethnic groups allegations of discrimination by other ethnic groups are common. Members of President Biya's Bulu ethnic group and of closely related Beti groups of southern Cameroon are represented disproportionately and hold key positions in government, the civil service, state-owned businesses, the security forces, the military and the ruling CPDM party. The large size and centralised character of the public sector has long been widely perceived to favour these groups. Since 1990, natives of the two Anglophone provinces, the North West and South West Province, have suffered disproportionately from human rights abuses committed by the government and its security forces, have been under-represented in the public sector and generally have believed that they have not received their fair share of public sector goods and services. [5][26][27][43]

**6.13** Northern Cameroon suffers from ethnic tensions between the Fulani (or Peuhl), a Muslim group that conquered most of the region 200 years ago and the "Kirdi," the descendants of diverse groups who then practiced traditional indigenous religions and whom the Fulani conquered or displaced, justifying their conquest on religious grounds. Although some Kirdi subsequently have adopted Islam, the Kirdi remain socially, educationally and economically disadvantaged relative to the Fulani in the three northern

provinces. Traditional Fulani rulers continue to wield great power over their subjects, often including Kirdi, sometimes subjecting them to tithing and forced labour. The slavery still practiced in parts of northern Cameroon is reported to be largely enslavement of Kirdi by Fulani. Although the UNDP party is largely made up of Fulanis, the ruling CPDM party is widely perceived to represent Fulani as well as Beti-Bulu interests. [43]

**6.14** During the 1990s, local language broadcasts by government-controlled regional radio stations in south Cameroon, as well as private French-language newspapers with close ties to leading government and CPDM figures, repeatedly have incited ethnic animosity against Bamilekes and Anglophones. [43]

**6.15** Members of the country's large Nigerian immigrants often complain of illegal discrimination and even persecution by elements of the government. Crackdowns on undocumented Nigerian immigrants repeatedly have been announced by government officials. For example, in March and April 1999, security forces in Fako Division in the South West Province reportedly conducted mass arrests of foreigners without residence permits, most of whom were Nigerians. [43]

**6.16** In June 1999, a land dispute between the Awing and Baligham tribes in the North West Province led to mass violence, in which several persons were injured; the dispute was subsequently adjudicated by a voluntary association of traditional rulers. [43]

**6.17** The Anglophone community based in the North West and South West Provinces claim that the Francophone majority enjoy more power and economic benefits. The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) was established to represent the interests of the Anglophone community and has advocated the independence of the two Anglophone provinces. It is reported that the Anglophone community suffers disproportionately from human rights violations committed by the government and its security forces. The SCNC is not a political party, but shares a number of supporters with opposition parties, most notably the SDF whose stronghold is the Anglophone provinces. The subject of greater autonomy for these provinces has been a source of political tension in Cameroon. President Biya is Francophone and John Fru Ndi of the SDF is Anglophone. [4][5][43]

**6.18** In March 1997, attacks by an armed gang in Bamenda, North West Province, resulted in the deaths of ten people, including three gendarmes. Whilst no group claimed responsibility for the attacks, the government attributed them to members of a group supporting independence for the two Anglophone provinces (including the SCNC and the affiliated Southern Cameroons Youth League, SCYL). [4][5][40]

**6.19** Homosexuality is against the law in Cameroon but homosexuals are not routinely arrested or persecuted. [52]

### **Women**

**6.20** There are high levels of violence against women. No reliable statistics on violence against women are available but the large number of newspaper reports indicates that it is widespread. Women's rights advocates report that the law does not impose effective penalties against men who commit acts of domestic violence. There are no gender-specific assault laws despite the fact that women are the predominant victims of domestic violence. Spousal abuse is not a legal ground for divorce. In cases of sexual assault, a

victim's family or village often imposes direct, summary punishment on the suspected perpetrator ranging from destruction of property to beating. [43]

**6.21** Constitutional provisions recognise women's rights but women do not enjoy the same rights and privileges as men. No legal definition of discrimination exists and some points of civil law are prejudicial to women. The 1981 Civil Code allows a husband to oppose his wife's right to work in a separate profession if the protest is made in the interest of the household and the family's interest. Partly for this reason, some employers require a husband's permission before they hire a woman. [43]

**6.22** Law and tradition allows polygyny but not polyandry. Whilst a man may be convicted of adultery only if the act takes place in his own home, a woman may be convicted without respect to venue. In the northern provinces, some Lamibe reportedly prevent their wives and concubines from ever leaving the palaces. [43]

**6.23** 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. 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. Another problem facing women is forced marriage; in some regions, girls' parents can and do give them away in marriage without their consent. Often, a bride's parents are paid a "bride price" by the husband, who is sometimes many years older than the girl. When a married man dies, his widow is often unable to collect any inheritance, since she herself is considered part of the man's property. The widow is often forced to marry one of the deceased's brothers. Refusal means that she must repay the bride price in full and leave the family property. The lack of a national legal code covering the family leaves women defenceless against customs advantageous to men. [43]

**6.24** Women also suffer from discrimination in access to education. The gap in school attendance rates between boys and girls is 9 per cent nationally and 14 per cent in the three northern provinces. This problem, which is especially acute in rural areas, results in higher levels of illiteracy among women than among men. According to a UN agency, the adult literacy rate was 75 per cent for men but only 52 per cent for women. In addition, fewer girls are found at higher levels of education. [43]

### **Children**

**6.25** Cameroon has achieved one of the highest rates of school attendance in Africa, however, education facilities vary from region to region. Education, which is bilingual, is provided by the government, missionary societies and private organisations. The Constitution provides for compulsory education to start at the age of 6 and is mandatory to the age of 14. It can continue until the age of 19 or 20 depending on the region. In the wake of public sector expenditure cuts and a currency devaluation in 1993/94, increases in formal and informal school fees relative to disposable income have forced many families to forego sending their children to school. Government spending on education

has been reduced from 4.3 per cent of recorded GDP in 1992/93 to an estimated 1.8 per cent of recorded GDP in 1998/99. [1] [43]

**6.26** In 1998, the government ordered the closure of about 180 unlicensed private primary and secondary schools, mostly in Doula and other pro-opposition areas, in which enrollment had grown to perhaps 50,000 pupils. These educational institutions have sprung up mainly in response to the deterioration of public schools. [43]

**6.27** A 1969 order and the 1992 Labour Code provide the legal framework for the protection of children in the field of labour and education. Article 86 of the Labour Code and the Ministerial Order both set the minimum age for the employment of children at 14. These tasks include moving heavy weights, dangerous and unhealthy tasks, working in confined areas, or tasks that could hurt a child's morality. The order also states that a child's workday cannot exceed 8 hours. In order to allow children between the ages of 14 and 18 to improve their knowledge and education, employers are required to train them. To this end, work contracts must contain a training provision for these minors. Ministry of Labour inspectors responsible for enforcing the law, however, lack the resources to carry out an effective inspection programme. [43]

**6.28** Female genital mutilation, which has been condemned by international health experts as damaging to both physical and psychological health, is practised throughout the country. It includes the most severe form of the abuse, infibulation, and usually is practised on pre-adolescent girls. The government has criticised the practice but no law prohibiting female genital mutilation is known to exist. [43]

### **Freedom to Travel**

**6.29** The law does not restrict freedom of movement within the country, or an individual's right to settle in any place. The police do frequently stop travellers to check identification documents, vehicle registrations and tax receipts as security and immigration control purposes. [43]

**6.30** Police commonly demand bribes from citizens whom they stop at roadblocks or at other points. This makes road travel both time-consuming and costly. Violent and sometimes fatal confrontations have occurred repeatedly at such checkpoints. [43]

**6.31** There were no reports in 1999 that the government used its passport control powers to prevent entry or exit from the country of critics and political opponents. Security forces, however, have sometimes prevented persons from travelling abroad if they have with them copies of private domestic newspapers. [43]

**POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS**

**Action for Meritocracy and Equal Opportunity Party (AMEC)**

Leader - Joachim Tabi Owono

**Alliance pour la Démocratie et le Développement (ADD)**

Secretary General - Garga Haman Adjii

**Alliance Démocratique pour le Progrès du Cameroun (ADPC)**

Formed in 1991

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

Leader - Bohin Bohin. Formed in 1991

**Alliance pour le Redressement du Cameroun (ARC)**

Formed in 1992 by a number of opposition movements

**Association Social-Démocrate du Cameroun (ASDC)**

Formed in 1991

**Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM)**

Advocates a federal system of government

**Congrès Panafricain du Cameroun (CPC)**

Formed in 1991

**Convention Libérale (CL)**

Leader - Pierre-Flambeau Ngayap. Formed in 1991

**Démocratie Intégrale au Cameroun (DIC)**

Leader - Gustave Essaka. Formed in 1991.

**Front des Alliés pour le Changement (FAC)**

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

**Front Démocratique et Patriotique (FDP)**

Formed in 1994. Comprises of 6 opposition parties

**Liberal Democratic Alliance (LDA)**

Leader - Henri Fossung

**Mouvement pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (MDP)**

Leader - Samuel Eboua

**Mouvement pour la Défense de la République (MDR)**

Leader - Dakole Daissala. Formed in 1991

**Mouvement pour la Jeunesse du Cameroun (MLJC)**

Leader - Marcel Yondo

**Mouvement Progressif (MP)**

Leader - Jean-Jacques Ekindi. Formed in 1991

**Mouvement Social pour la Nouvelle Démocratie (MSND)**

Leader - Yondo Black

**Nouvelle Convention (NC)**

**Parti de l'action du Peuple (PAP)**

Leader - Victor Mukuelle Ngoh

**Parti de l'alliance Libérale (PAL)**

Leader - Céléstin Bedzigui

**Parti des Démocrates Camerounais (PDC)**

Leader - Louis-Tobie Mbida. Formed in 1991

**Parti Libéral-Démocrate (PLD)**

Leader - Njoh Litumbe. Formed in 1991

**Parti National du Progrès (PNP)**

Leader - Antar Gassagay

**Parti Ouvrier Unifié du Cameroun (POUC)**

Leader - Dieudonné Bizole

**Parti Populaire pour le Développement (PPD)**

Formed in 1997

**Parti Républicain du Peuple Camerounais (PRPC)**

Leader - Ateba Ngoua. Formed in 1991

**Parti Socialiste Camerounais (PSC)**

Leader - Jean-Pierre Dembele

**Parti Socialiste Démocratique (PSD)**

Leader - Ernest Koum Bin Biltik. Formed in 1991

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

Leader - Jean Michel Tekam

**Rassemblement Camerounais pour la République (RCR)**

Leader - Samuel Wouaffo

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

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

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

**Rassemblement des Forces Patriotiques (RFP)**

Leader - Ema Otou

**Rassemblement pour l'unité Nationale (RUN)**

Formed in 1991

**Social Democratic Front (SDF)**

Leader - John Fru Ndi. Formed in 1990

**Social Democratic Movement (SDM)**

Leader - Siga Asanga. Formed in 1995

**Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC)**

Leader - Sam Ekontang Elad. Formed in 1995

**Union Démocratique du Cameroun (UDC)**

Leader - Adamou Ndam Njoya. Formed in 1991

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

Leader - Victorin Hameni Bieleu. Formed in 1991

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

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

**Union du Peuple Africain (UPA)**

Leader - Hubert Kamgang

**Union des Populations Camerounaises (UPC)**

Leader - Ndeh Ntumazah. Formed in 1948 and divided into two main factions in 1996:UPC (N)

led by Ndeh Ntumazah and UPC (K), led by Augustin Kodock

**Union des Républicains du Cameroun (URC)**

Formed in 1991

**Union Sociale Démocratique (USD)**

Formed in 1991

[2]

**PROMINENT PEOPLE**

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

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

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

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

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

**Simon Achidi** Appointed Prime Minister in April 1992.

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

**Peter Mafany** Appointed Prime Minister September 1996.

**Musonge** Re-appointed on 7 December 1997. Anglophone politician.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1919** - The Kamerun protectorate is divided into British and French zones of influence.
- 1922** - The territory is divided into French Cameroun and Northern and Southern Cameroun.
- 1948** - The Union des Populations Camerounaises (UDPC) is formed.
- 1955** - John Foncha forms the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP).
- 1957** - French Cameroun becomes an autonomous state.
- 1/1/60** - The Republic of Cameroon is established and Ahmadou Ahidjo is elected as the 1st President.
- 1/10/61** - Southern Cameroons and the Republic of Cameroon merge to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. (Northern Cameroon merges with Nigeria). Ahmadou Ahidjo assumes the presidency with John Foncha as his vice president.
- 1966** - The Union Nationale Camerounaise (UNC) is formed.
- 6/1972** - The country is re-named the United Republic of Cameroon. Ahmadou Ahidjo retains the presidency.
- 4/1975** - Ahmadou Ahidjo is re-elected President.
- 6/1975** - Paul Biya is appointed Prime Minister.
- 4/1980** - Ahmadou Ahidjo is re-elected President.
- 11/1982** - Ahmadou Ahidjo resigns and Paul Biya assumes the presidency. Bello Bouba
- 1982** - Maigari becomes the Prime Minister.
- 22/8/82** - President Biya announces the suppression of an attempt to overthrow the government.
- 1983** - Bello Bouba Maigari is dismissed.
- 27/8/83** - Ahmadou Ahidjo resigns as Chairman of the UNC and seeks exile in France and Senegal.
- 1/84** - Paul Biya is re-elected as President.
- 2/84** - Ahmadou Ahidjo is tried in his absence for his alleged involvement in the 1983 coup attempt

- 1984** - He is sentenced to death which is later commuted to life imprisonment.
- 4/1984** - An attempt by the republican guard to overthrow the government is suppressed.
- 3/1985** - The UNC is re-named the Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounaise (RDPC) - Cameroon Peoples Democratic Movement (CPDM).
- 4/1988** - Legislative and Presidential elections are held. Paul Biya retains the presidency.
- 11/1989** - Ahmadou Ahidjo dies.
- 6/1990** - Paul Biya is re-elected as President.
- 12/1990** - The National Assembly approves a constitutional amendment establishing a multi- party system.
- 4/1991** - Demonstrations and riots are held in protest against President Biya's reluctance to hold a conference to formulate a time-table for multi-party elections.
- 5/1991** - The University of Yaoundé is closed following the suppression of student demonstrations. 7 out of the 10 provinces are placed under military rule.
- 6/1991** - The government prohibits meetings of opposition parties and a general strike is called by the National Co-ordination Committee of Opposition Parties (NCCOP).
- 10/1991** - President Biya announces that legislative elections will take place in February 1992.
- 11/1991** - The ban on opposition gatherings is revoked.
- 12/1991** - Military rule in the 7 provinces ends.
- 1/3/92** - Legislative elections are held with the RDPC winning 88 seats and securing an absolute majority by forming an alliance with the Mouvement pour la défense de la République (MDR).
- 11/10/92** - Presidential elections are held and Paul Biya is re-elected.
- 5/1993** - Draft constitutional amendments are promulgated.
- 11/1993** - The government announces a reduction in the salary of public sector workers.
- 12/1993** - Opposition supporters organise a general strike.
- 1/1994** - Demonstrations by students demanding improved conditions are suppressed by security forces.
- 2/1994** - The government dismisses striking teachers.

- 10/1994** - The Social Democratic Front (SDF) organises a one-day strike.
- 7/1995** - Members of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) stage demonstrations demanding autonomy for the former portion of British Cameroons. Several independently-owned newspapers suspend publication in protest at press censorship.
- 11/1995** - Cameroon is admitted to the Commonwealth.
- 12/1995** - The National Assembly adopts revised constitutional amendments.
- 24/1/96** - Municipal elections are held with the RDPC/CPDM winning approximately 55% of the local government areas.
- 16/1/96** - The government lifts press censorship.
- 3/1997** - Attacks by armed groups against government and security buildings in several towns in North West Province leave approximately 10 dead. A curfew is imposed and a number of people are arrested.
- 17/5/97** - Legislative elections are held with the RDPC/CPDM winning 109 of the 180 seats contested.
- 3/8/97** - Re-run of elections in 7 constituencies in which the Supreme Court nullified the earlier election results. RDPC obtains all the seats.
- 12/10/97** - Presidential elections held. Boycotted by the 3 main opposition parties. Biya wins 92.6% of the vote.
- 5/11/97** - Biya sworn in as president for a 7 year term.
- 12/1997** - Members of the Government of National Unity announced.
- 1/1998** - Pius Njawé, editor of Le Messenger, is sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment and a fine of £500.
- 2/1998 & 3/1998** - Clashes between Nigeria and Cameroon over the disputed Bakassi Peninsula.
- 4/1998** - Pius Njawé's sentence is reduced on appeal to one year's imprisonment and a fine of £300.
- 7/1998** - Court sentences two police officers in connection with the death in custody of a burglary suspect in November 1997.

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

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

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

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

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

1. Europa World Year Book Volume I 1999 Cameroon section
2. Africa South of the Sahara 2000 Cameroon section
3. US Department of State Cameroon Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997 issued 30 January 1998
4. Amnesty International Report: Cameroon - Blatant Disregard for Human Rights dated 16 September 1997
5. US Department of State Cameroon Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998 issued 26 February 1999
6. Reuters news report dated 9 October 1997
7. Economic Intelligence Unit Country Report: 2nd quarter 1998
8. The Parliamentary Elections in Cameroon, 17 May 1997 Conclusions and Recommendations - The Report of the Commonwealth Observer Group dated December 1997
9. Amnesty International "Urgent Action" dated 23 June 1997
10. Reuters news report dated 12 October 1997
11. Reuters news report dated 7 October 1997
12. Reuters news report dated 10 October 1997
13. Reuters news report dated 13 October 1997
14. BBC Monitoring Service news report dated 5 November 1997
15. Reuters news report dated 7 December 1997
16. Reuters news report dated 5 December 1997
17. AFP News Agency report dated 15 December 1997
18. BBC Monitoring Service report dated 11 February 1998
19. Foreign and Commonwealth Office note dated 16 September 1998
20. AFP news agency report dated 5 December 1997
21. Reuters news report dated 13 March 1998
22. Radio France Internationale report dated 21 March 1998

23. BBC Monitoring Service report dated 9 October 1998
24. AFP News Agency report dated 16 October 1998
25. Africa News Service report dated 25 November 1998
26. Cameroon Constitution as amended on 18 January 1996
27. Human Rights: International Instruments - Chart of Ratifications as at 31 December 1997, United Nations
28. Amnesty International Africa Update: September 1997 to March 1998
29. Amnesty International "Urgent Action" dated 15 April 1998
30. Reuters news report dated 30 November 1998
31. BBC Monitoring Service report dated 2 July 1998
32. Article 19: Cameroon - A Transition in Crisis dated October 1997
33. Reuters news report dated 16 January 1996
34. Article 19: Cameroon - Harassment of the Press Continues Issue 47 dated February 1997
35. "The Times" newspaper article dated 26 February 1998
36. BBC Monitoring Service report dated 17 April 1998
37. Amnesty International "Urgent Action" dated 16 October 1998
38. Radio France Internationale report dated 18 September 1998, BBC Monitoring Online
39. Radio France Internationale report dated 12 October 1998, BBC Monitoring Online
40. Amnesty International "Urgent Action" dated 29 October 1998
41. BBC Monitoring Service report dated 25 May 1998
42. Reuters news report dated 25 January 1999
43. US Department of State Cameroon Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1999, issued 25 February 2000
44. Reuters news report dated 31 December 1998
45. Africa News Service report dated 21 January 1999
46. Reuters news report dated 28 January 1999
47. Amnesty International News Release - 7 October 1999

48. Amnesty International News Release - 9 November 1999
49. Amnesty International News Release - 29 February 2000
50. Amnesty International 1999 Report on Cameroon
51. United Nations Economic and Social Council Report - Civil and Political Rights, Including Questions of Torture and Detention - 11 November 1999 (without annexes in French)
52. Letter from Foreign Office to Home Office about homosexuality in Cameroon dated 25 January 2000
53. Reuters news report dated 4 April 2000