

RESEARCHED AND COMPILED BY THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF IRELAND ON THE 14 JULY 2025

DISCLAIMER

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. All COI Query Responses are compiled in line with the Common EU Guidelines (2008) and the EUAA Methodology (2023). This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. Please refer to all documents cited.

COI QUERY RESPONSE

CAMEROON – INFORMATION ON WRONGFUL IMPRISONMENT OF CIVILIANS

The *World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)* in June 2025 reported that: “Journalists in Cameroon are under sustained attack through arbitrary arrests, intimidation and harsh prison sentences, especially ahead of the 2025 elections. Over the last few years, numerous journalists, especially those involved in documenting abuses in the Anglophone regions or criticising government policies have been detained and tortured. Examples include Samuel Wazizi, who died while in custody in 2020 under suspicious circumstances; authorities disclosed his death only 10 months later, claiming he was sick, despite reports he was healthy upon arrest; Michel Biem Tong, a journalist detained and tortured for his reporting on conflict and human rights; the allegations of torture suffered by blogger Sébastien Ebalá. These cases highlight the severe repression of dissident voices.”¹

A report issued by *Amnesty International* May 2025 states that: “The life sentence handed down to Anglophone peace activist Abdu Karim Ali is an affront to justice, and he should be released immediately, Amnesty International said today, after obtaining the judgment convicting him. Abdu Karim Ali, who was charged with “hostility against the homeland” and “secession”, was sentenced by the military Court in Yaoundé on 16 April. He had been arrested without a warrant in Bamenda in August 2022 after he denounced torture committed and broadcast online by the leader of a pro-government militia in the south-west region of the country. He has been arbitrarily detained since then. “Abdu Karim Ali waited nearly three years before being tried by a military court and sentenced to an extreme punishment simply for exercising his right to freedom of expression. This shameful judgment breaches international human rights law and standards,” said Marceau Sivieude, Amnesty International's Interim Regional Director for West and Central Africa.”²

In January 2025 *Freedom House* commented that: “Tsi Conrad, a Cameroonian journalist who has been unjustly imprisoned since December 2016, is hopeful that President Donald Trump will continue to call out the Biya regime’s abuses and push for democracy in Cameroon.”³

¹ World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) (25 June 2025) Global Torture Index 2025: Cameroon Factsheet

² Amnesty International (15 May 2025) Cameroon: Deplorable life sentence handed to peace activist an “affront to justice”

³ Freedom House (22 January 2025) Hope and Despair in Cameroon’s Yaoundé Central Prison

In October 2024 the *Reporters Sans Frontières* commented that: “On 24 September, Cameroon suffered yet another attack on press freedom: freelance journalist Kingsley Fumunyuy Njoka was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment by the Yaoundé military court for “secession and complicity with armed gangs”. His crime? Authoring reports published in 2020 on the armed conflict raging in the northwest of the country. Arrested without a warrant on 15 May 2020 at his home in Douala, the country’s economic capital, by three members of the Bonabéri research brigade, Njoka has been held in pre-trial detention at the Kondengui Central Prison in the Yaoundé region ever since. Before his arrest, Njoka regularly published reports critical of the authorities, notably working for the English-language media outlet *Canal 2 English* on the “Anglophone crisis”, an armed conflict in the English-speaking zones of western Cameroon between the military and separatists that has claimed 6,000 lives since 2017. One of Njoka’s lawyers, Amungwa Tanyi Nicodemus, a former journalist who worked with Njoka, told RSF this was an “unfair trial, in violation of Cameroonian laws and international law,” stressing that “the time limit for detention without trial, 18 months maximum in this kind of case, was not respected at all.” Nicodemus appealed against this conviction on 27 September.”⁴

This document also states that: ““This is the second prison sentence for a journalist in less than a month — following that of Amadou Vamouké — and illustrates how Cameroon is sinking deeper into its crackdown against the right to inform, which has been underway for several years. The case of Kingsley Njoka, who was illegally held in pre-trial detention for four years before being arbitrarily sentenced, reveals the fate awaiting journalists reporting on the Anglophone crisis. His situation is not unlike that of his colleague Samuel Wazizi, who was also arrested for covering the crisis and died in custody in 2019. Kingsley Njoka’s wrongful conviction on baseless charges must be overturned and he must be released immediately.””⁵

The *Committee to Protect Journalists* in September 2024 mentioned that: “Over the past five years, there have been several incidents of journalists being arrested, often while reporting. Following a presidential pardon on December 15, 2018, the government released 289 prisoners who had been arrested and/or prosecuted in military tribunals, some of whom were journalists. However, we remain concerned that the arbitrary imprisonment of journalists continues. Cameroon continues to be one of the largest jailers of journalists in Africa. It is the third worst jailer of journalists in sub-Saharan Africa and has been featured on CPJ’s annual “prison census” for every year since 2014. Notably, it has not fared better since the last review in 2018, with a range of 5 to 9 journalists jailed in government custody per year from 2018 to 2022.”⁶

The *American Bar Association (ABA)* in June 2024 points out that: “The government has used a variety of spurious charges to imprison frontline defenders whom it perceives as a threat.”⁷

The *Austrian Centre for Country of Origin & Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD)* in January 2024 notes that: “As of December 2022, ten separatist leaders, including Julius Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, who were sentenced to life imprisonment by the Yaoundé Military Tribunal in 2019, remained in prison, with the Court of Appeals confirming the sentence in September 2021. In November, the

⁴ Reporters Sans Frontières (1 October 2024) Cameroon: RSF condemns absurd 10-year prison sentence for journalist Kingsley Fumunyuy Njoka

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ Committee to Protect Journalists (16 September 2024) Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee: Cameroon (Freedom of opinion and expression; freedom of the press)

⁷ American Bar Association (ABA) (24 June 2024) Cameroon: Military Courts

UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared the imprisonment of these ten individuals to be arbitrary (USDOS, 20 March 2023, section 1e).⁸

This document also states that: “According to a November 2023 report by Amnesty International and different civil society organizations of Cameroon, as a reaction to attacks by armed separatists, the government has frequently responded with arbitrary arrest and detention of individuals accused of having connections with armed separatist groups. “Hundreds of people” have been held, prosecuted, or “tried before military tribunals”, despite international human rights standards specifying that such jurisdiction should be limited to military offenses, leading to prolonged imprisonment for many without judicial review.”⁹

The *European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA)* in October 2023 notes that: “Deutsche Welle (DW) in October 2020 reported that ‘activists, politicians and academics from Cameroon’s Anglophone regions’ who were arrested in relation to the Anglophone crisis remained imprisoned. Incidents concerning activists in Northwest and Southwest regions, as reported by sources, include:

- Two protest leaders from the Northwest and Southwest Anglophone regions, who were arrested in 2016 and 2017 for participating in demonstrations, were sentenced by a military court in Yaoundé to 15 years in prison under the charge of “acts of terrorism, secession, spreading false information, and contempt for public bodies and officials”. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called for their release in 2019 and 2021, but as of 2022, the two individuals remained in prison.”¹⁰

The *Front Line Defenders (Ireland)* in July 2023 notes that: “HRDs have faced abuses and repression in carrying out their human rights work such as reporting on the conflict-related human rights violations against civilians. These HRDs have faced repressions from different actors, including government authorities and armed groups. This has made it difficult for HRDs to navigate the civic environment. HRDs have been imprisoned without charge, held incommunicado, and accused of apology for terrorism, among other forms of repression. The anti-terrorism law which was promulgated on 23 December 2014 allows for Cameroonian citizens to be charged in military courts and to face the death penalty for acts of terrorism, although the definition of terrorism contained within the law remains extremely vague. This law has been used against HRDs as a reprisal for their human rights work, and has resulted in particularly harsh sentences.”¹¹

In July 2023 *Freedom House* reported that: “The arbitrary imprisonment of journalists coupled with incommunicado and lengthy pre-trial detention has made Cameroon the second worst jailer of journalists in sub-Saharan Africa after Eritrea. Cameroon also detains journalists the longest after Eritrea. Five journalists are currently being detained there, four of whom are being held on anti-state charges in connection with the ongoing Anglophone conflict that has pitted separatists in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon against the forces of the majority French-speaking government. The Cameroonian government uses anti-terror, anti-state, “false news” charges, and criminal defamation legislation to detain and convict journalists. It also prosecutes journalists by military tribunals rather than impartial civilian courts and consistently denies them the right to a fair trial and appeals process.”¹²

⁸ Austrian Centre for Country of Origin & Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) (4 January 2024) Cameroon: The Cameroon Anglophone Crisis (2021 – 2023)

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) (19 October 2023) EUAA COI Query - Cameroon: Treatment of pro-Anglophone protesters and activists, including students, in Northwest and Southwest regions

¹¹ Front Line Defenders (Ireland) (21 July 2023) UPR Submission: Cameroon (Situation of human rights defenders)

¹² Freedom House (17 July 2023) NGOs call for protection of journalists in Cameroon ahead of country’s UN human rights review

References

American Bar Association (ABA) (24 June 2024) *Cameroon: Military Courts*
<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/cameroon-military-courts>

(Accessed on 14 July 2025)

This is a subscription database

Amnesty International (15 May 2025) *Cameroon: Deplorable life sentence handed to peace activist an "affront to justice"*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/cameroon-deplorable-life-sentence-handed-peace-activist-affront-justice>

(Accessed on 14 July 2025)

This is a subscription database

Austrian Centre for Country of Origin & Asylum Research and Documentation (ACCORD) (4 January 2024) *Cameroon: The Cameroon Anglophone Crisis (2021 – 2023)*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/cameroon-cameroon-anglophone-crisis-2021-2023>

(Accessed on 14 July 2025)

This is a subscription database

Freedom House (22 January 2025) *Hope and Despair in Cameroon's Yaoundé Central Prison*

<https://freedomhouse.org/article/hope-and-despair-camerouns-yaounde-central-prison>

(Accessed on 14 July 2025)

Committee to Protect Journalists (16 September 2024) *Submission to the United Nations Human Rights Committee: Cameroon (Freedom of opinion and expression; freedom of the press)*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/submission-united-nations-human-rights-committee-cameroon-freedom-opinion>

(Accessed on 14 July 2025)

This is a subscription database

Freedom House (17 July 2023) *NGOs call for protection of journalists in Cameroon ahead of country's UN human rights review*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/ngos-call-protection-journalists-cameroon-ahead-countrys-un-human-rights>

(Accessed on 14 July 2025)

This is a subscription database

Front Line Defenders (Ireland) (21 July 2023) *UPR Submission: Cameroon (Situation of human rights defenders)*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/upr-submission-cameroon-situation-human-rights-defenders>

(Accessed on 14 July 2025)

This is a subscription database

Reporters Sans Frontières (1 October 2024) *Cameroon: RSF condemns absurd 10-year prison sentence for journalist Kingsley Fumunyuy Njoka*

<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2119069.html>

(Accessed on 14 July 2025)

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) (25 June 2025) *Global Torture Index 2025: Cameroon Factsheet*

<https://www.ein.org.uk/members/country-report/global-torture-index-2025-cameroon-factsheet>

(Accessed on 14 July 2025)

This is a subscription database

Sources Consulted:

Amnesty International
BBC News
Electronic Immigration Network
European Country of Origin Information Network
Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
International Crisis Group
Lexis Nexis
Minority Rights Group International
New Humanitarian
Online Newspapers
Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
Reliefweb
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State
UNHCR Refworld

Contact Information

Refugee Documentation Centre
Legal Aid Board
48/49 North Brunswick Street
Dublin 7
Ireland

Email: research@legalaidboard.ie