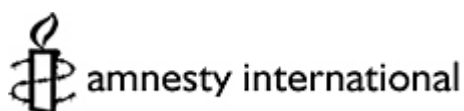


Title	Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Cameroon
Publisher	Amnesty International
Country	Cameroon
Publication Date	24 May 2012
Cite as	Amnesty International, <i>Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Cameroon</i> , 24 May 2012, available at: http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4fbc394ac.html [accessed 1 June 2012]
Disclaimer	This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.



Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Cameroon

Head of state: **Paul Biya**
 Head of government: **Philémon Yang**
 Death penalty: **abolitionist in practice**
 Population: **20 million**
 Life expectancy: **51.6 years**
 Under-5 mortality: **154.3 per 1,000**
 Adult literacy: **70.7 per cent**

The government continued to restrict the activities of political opponents and journalists. People suspected of same-sex relations were detained and some sentenced to lengthy prison terms. The government reduced some prison sentences and commuted death sentences, but did not reveal how many.

Background

President Biya was re-elected with 75 per cent of the vote following presidential elections on 9 October. Of the 22 opposition presidential candidates, his closest rival, John Fru Ndi of the Social Democratic Front, won just over 10 per cent. Opposition political parties claimed that the election was unfair. Election observers from the AU, International Organization of La Francophonie and the Commonwealth stated that the election was generally fair, while the US Ambassador to Cameroon said that US government observers noted widespread irregularities at every level.

Before starting a new term in November, President Biya issued a decree commuting sentences imposed by the courts. According to the decree, people serving prison sentences of one year or less were to be released and those serving life imprisonment would have their sentences reduced to 20 years. Death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment. Prisoners convicted of economic crimes, aggravated robbery or murder were excluded from the presidential pardon.

There were several attacks by armed groups on the Bakassi Peninsula, which reverted to Cameroon from Nigeria following a 2002 International Court of Justice decision. In one such attack in February, two Cameroonian soldiers were killed and at least 13 civilians abducted.

Corruption charges

Several dozen former government officials accused of corruption remained in custody, many awaiting trial or serving prison sentences. The trial of Titus Edzoa and Thierry Atangana on new corruption charges had not concluded by the end of the year, although they were close to completing their 15-year prison term imposed in 1997 following an unfair trial.

Impunity

Members of the security forces who committed or ordered serious human rights violations, including unlawful killings, during demonstrations and riots in February 2008 continued to enjoy impunity. The judiciary failed to investigate the violations and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Freedom of expression

Several journalists and government critics were detained and some released during the year.

- Bertrand Zepherin Teyou, a writer arrested in November 2010 while trying to launch his book about the wife of the President, was released on 29 April. He had been found guilty of "contempt of a personality" by the High Court in Douala and sentenced to a fine of 2,030,150 CFA francs (approximately US\$4,425) or two years' imprisonment.
- Human rights defenders and lawyers continued to call for the release of former mayor Paul Eric Kingué, serving a prison sentence in connection with the February 2008 riots, on the grounds that he was victimized for criticizing abuses by government forces. He was also on trial for alleged corruption.
- Pierre Roger Lambo Sandjo, a musician, completed his three-year prison term and was released in April without being required to pay the fine of 330 million CFA francs imposed in 2008. Human rights defenders believed that he was imprisoned because he composed a song criticizing the amendment of the Constitution that allowed the President to stand for re-election.
- Agence France Presse correspondent Reinnier Kazé was arrested on 23 February by gendarmes while covering an opposition demonstration in Douala. Officers deleted recordings on his dictaphone before releasing him the following day.
- In May, police prevented the public showing of a documentary on alleged human rights abuses linked to commercial banana production. The documentary reportedly claimed that small-scale banana growers were removed from their land without compensation and that plantation workers were poorly paid.
- Gueimé Djimé, a member of OS-Civil Droits de l'Homme human rights group based in Kousséri, Extreme North province, was shot dead as he slept on the night of 10 June. Members of OS-Civil had reportedly received anonymous death threats relating to the group's opposition to the appointment of two local chiefs. Although four men suspected of killing Gueimé Djimé were arrested, no one had been brought to justice by the end of the year.

Freedom of association and assembly

Political and human rights groups were frequently denied the right to organize peaceful activities or demonstrations.

- At least eight political activists, including former members of a students' association, were arrested in February by members of the Directorate of Territorial Surveillance security service in Yaoundé; they had met to organize a demonstration to commemorate victims of human rights violations during demonstrations in February 2008. The detainees were denied access to lawyers and charged with endangering the security of the state. They were provisionally released but had not been brought to trial by the end of the year.

- In April, police in Douala detained political activist Mboua Massock while he tried to organize a meeting to protest against the October presidential elections. He was taken 35km from Douala and abandoned.
- In May, riot police in Yaoundé arrested 37 farmers and dispersed more than 100 others for trying to demonstrate against bad roads and inadequate government support for agriculture. Those arrested were released on 1 June without charge.

The security forces continued to arrest members of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) and disrupt or prevent their meetings. The SCNC advocates secession of anglophone Cameroonian provinces from largely francophone Cameroon.

- In February, members of the security forces arrested SCNC national chairman Chief Ayamba Ette Otun and several other people who were travelling with him to Bamenda, capital of North West province. Ayamba Ette Otun was reportedly returning from Buea in South West province where he had handed an SCNC memorandum to a visiting delegation from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. All were released several days later without charge.
- On 1 October, members of the security forces disrupted a meeting of the SCNC in Buea and arrested 50 people, claiming that the SCNC had not obtained prior permission to hold the meeting. They were released without charge several days later.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

The government proposed to amend the Penal Code to allow sentences of up to 15 years' imprisonment and large fines to be imposed on people found guilty of same-sex relations. Men convicted of same-sex relations continued to be sentenced to prison terms of up to five years.

- Jean-Claude Roger Mbede was sentenced to three years' imprisonment on 28 April after being convicted of same-sex relations. In November, the Yaoundé Court of Appeal adjourned his appeal to February 2012.
- Frankie Ndome Ndome, Jonas Nsinga Kimie and Hilaire Nguiffo were sentenced to five years' imprisonment in November for same-sex relations.
- Joseph Magloire Ombwa, Nicolas Ntamack, Sylvain Séraphin Ntsama and Emma Loutsi Tiomela were still awaiting trial at the end of the year after being arrested in August. Stéphane Nounga and one other known as Eric O., who were arrested in August, were provisionally released.
- Others arrested and released for alleged same-sex relations included Jean Jules Moussongo, Steve O., Depadou N. and Pierre Arno. Some of them had been lured into a trap by members of the security forces or their agents who claimed to be gay men seeking relationships.

Death penalty

The government informed Amnesty International in March that 17 people had been sentenced to death during 2010. The authorities said that all had appealed against their sentences but gave no further information about death sentences during 2011.

A presidential decree issued on 3 November commuted death penalty sentences to life imprisonment. However, the decree excluded those who had been convicted of murder or aggravated robbery and did not specify how many had had their sentences commuted.

Copyright notice: © Copyright Amnesty International