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Republic of Cameroon

Head of state: **Paul Biya**

Head of government: **Philémon Yang**

Freedoms of association and assembly continued to be restricted. Human rights defenders were frequently intimidated and harassed by government security agents. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people continued to face discrimination, intimidation, harassment and other forms of attacks. The Nigerian Islamist armed group Boko Haram stepped up attacks in the northeastern region of Cameroon, including killings, burning villages and hostage-taking. Arbitrary arrests, detentions and extrajudicial executions of people suspected of being members of Boko Haram were reportedly carried out by security agents. Hundreds of thousands of refugees from Nigeria and the Central African Republic were living in crowded refugee camps in dire conditions.

Background

There were signs of instability across the country as a result of internal political tensions and external developments, including ongoing cross-border attacks by Boko Haram, and violence in neighbouring Central African Republic (CAR). Security forces including the Rapid Intervention Brigade (BIR) were responsible for human rights violations including killings, extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions. Most of these violations were committed in the context of the fight against Boko Haram.

Extrajudicial executions

A number of people suspected of being linked to Boko Haram were allegedly killed by security forces, including by members of the BIR, in northern Cameroon. On 1 June, nurse Nzouane Clair René was shot dead near the town of Mora, following arrest by security forces. On the same day, Ousmane Djibrine and Gréma Abakar, traders travelling to a village market in Zigagué, were reportedly killed by BIR members in the village of Dabanga. On 15 June Malloum Abba was killed by BIR members in the village of Tolkomari. On 20 June Oumaté Kola was reportedly

found shot dead in the Mozogo forest following his arrest by BIR members a few days earlier. The same day, Boukar Madjo was shot dead, allegedly by BIR members, in the town of Nguetchewé.

Enforced disappearances

Several cases of enforced disappearance were reported, especially in the extreme north of the country where security forces were fighting Boko Haram. Most of the reported cases were allegedly committed by members of the BIR.

On 2 June, Abakar Kamsouloum was reportedly arrested by security forces at his home in Kousseri and transferred to a military camp. His fate and whereabouts remained unknown to his family and local civil society organizations at the end of the year, despite several requests for information to the local authorities.

Abuses by armed groups

Boko Haram was responsible for human rights abuses, especially in the northeastern region. Houses were burned and a number of people were killed during raids on villages, often in punitive attacks for real or perceived co-operation with Cameroonian security forces.

Boko Haram fighters conducted several abductions in Cameroon during the year. Some of those abducted were released, reportedly often after payment of a ransom by the government. The authorities continued to refute this allegation. On 27 July, the residence of Cameroonian Vice-Prime Minister Amadou Ali was attacked by Boko Haram members in the village of Kolofata, close to the Nigerian border. Seventeen people were abducted including the Vice-Prime Minister's wife. Several others including police officers were killed during the attack. All those abducted were released in October together with 10 Chinese workers who were abducted in May.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

Thousands of refugees were living in dire conditions in crowded camps in border areas after fleeing violence in the CAR and Nigeria. At the end of the year there were around 40,000 refugees from Nigeria and some 238,517 from the CAR in the country. At least 130, 000 refugees from the CAR crossed into Cameroon following violence that erupted in the CAR between the Séléka and Anti-balaka armed groups in December 2013. Conditions were difficult in the camps and attacks on camps by unidentified armed groups were reported. These attacks led UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, to move refugees from border areas to more secure places within Cameroon.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

Discrimination, intimidation, harassment and violence directed towards LGBTI people remained of serious concern. LGBTI individuals, mostly men but also women, were arrested for alleged same-sex sexual activity. Some of those arrested were sentenced to prison terms of up to five years. Others were arbitrarily detained and later released.

On 1 October, five people, including one transgendered person, were arrested after police raided a home in the capital Yaoundé. They were later detained at a nearby police station and a sixth person was also detained when he visited those already in detention. Two of those arrested were released the same day. The other four were charged with prostitution and "disturbance" and remained in detention until 7 October, when they were released pending an investigation.

Human rights defenders

Human rights defenders and groups were frequently intimidated, harassed and threatened. Offices of some human rights organizations were placed under surveillance and at times attacked, allegedly by security agents.

On the night of 12 June, the premises of the Central Africa Human Rights Defenders' Network (REDHAC) were burgled by a group of eight unidentified armed men. They threatened to kill the guard before forcing their way into the offices, searching through documents and reportedly taking two television sets, three laptops, an iPad and some money. The incident was the fourth time REDHAC's offices had been attacked, but despite the organization lodging complaints with the police, no concrete measure was taken by the authorities to effectively and fully investigate the incidents.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

People continued to be arrested and detained without charge by security forces including by members of the BIR in the context of its operation against Boko Haram in the northern regions. There were several cases of people being detained incommunicado. In most cases, detainees were prevented from receiving visits from family members, doctors or lawyers. There were also several reported cases of people being arbitrarily arrested and detained by the police and gendarmerie for civil matters, contrary to provisions of the Constitution and domestic legislation.

Freedoms of association and assembly

Perceived or actual opponents of the government continued to be denied the right to organize peaceful activities and demonstrations.

On 3 October, reggae singer Joe de Vinci Kameni, known as Joe La Conscience, was arrested by police outside the French consulate in Douala as he was preparing to start a peaceful demonstration. A local journalist was arrested alongside him and later released. Joe de Vinci Kameni was released on 9 October without charge.

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