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Cameroon: The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) and the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL); organizational structures; leaders; activities; membership cards; treatment of their members by government authorities (2010-February 2014)

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1. Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC)

Sources indicate that the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) is a secessionist movement (BBC 13 Feb. 2014; PHW 2013; AI Jan. 2013). Amnesty International (AI) explains that the SCNC "advocates the secession of anglophone Cameroonian provinces from largely francophone Cameroon" (2012). However, the SCNC has declared that they are not secessionists (SCNC 27 June 2012; SCNC 16 Feb. 2011). The SCNC states that it is seeking "the 'restoration of statehood and independence...'" (ibid.). The SCNC website indicates that it is a movement founded in Buea in 1993, which is "fighting for freedom, justice and [the] right to self determination" (27 June 2012).

Sources report that there are various SCNC factions (Cameroon Mirror 20 Jan. 2014; UNPO 29 June 2011). According to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), an international organization whose membership includes "indigenous peoples, minorities, and territories who have joined to protect and promote their human rights through nonviolent solutions" (ibid. 16 Mar. 2011), SCNC activists in Cameroon and in the Diaspora have met "to form a common front" (ibid. 29 June 2011). The UNPO says that a meeting convened by "SCNC front of Oslo, Norway" intended to unite "SCNC factions like Southern Cameroons People Organization

(SCAPO), Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL), Ambazonia, Chief Ayamba and Nwachan Tomas' SCNCs" (ibid.). According to a press release written by a group claiming to be the SCNC in Washington, "the radical wing of SCNC is seeking to secede" from the Republic of Cameroon (PRWeb 27 Dec. 2013).

AI states that, the "SCNC claims that Anglophone Cameroonians are discriminated against and oppressed in favour of their Francophone compatriots and ... have been illegally forced into a federation with the rest of Cameroon" (Jan. 2013, 21). The UNPO, of which the SCNC is a member (UNPO 28 Feb. 2005), provides the following historical description of Southern Cameroon and the goals of the SCNC:

Southern Cameroons was part of the British Mandate Territory of the Cameroons in West Africa until independence in 1961 when it formed a federation with the French-speaking Republic of Cameroon, which had gained independence one year earlier. A decade later this federation was turned into a unitary state; the Southern Cameroons lost its autonomy and was instead parted into two different provinces, the Southwest and the Northwest provinces. This gave rise to movements calling for increased autonomy for the Southern Cameroons, calls that eventually resulted in the 1993 All Anglophone Conference that gathered these different organizations. The aim of the conference was to restore the autonomous status of Southern Cameroons and to return to the federation created in the 1960s. The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) was formed to work towards this goal. (ibid. 16 Mar. 2011)

1.1 Organizational Structure and Leaders

The SCNC says that the National Council is its "highest governing body" (SCNC 8 Aug. 2013). Sources listed Chief Ayamba Ette Otun as the chairman of the SCNC (PHW 2013; SCNC 16 Feb. 2011) and Nfor Nfor [Nfor Ngala Nfor (SCNC 3 Oct. 2011)] as the vice chairman of the SCNC (PHW 2013; SCNC 3 Oct. 2011). The SCNC also named Mola Mjoh Litumbe as the vice chairman (SCNC 3 Oct. 2011). However, according to a 14 May 2013 SCNC document, the National Council "adopted a motion mandating the National Vice Chairman to assume full powers of the National Chairman and serve diligently until elections are conducted in the SCNC" (14 May 2013a). An 11 August 2013 SCNC document lists Nfor Ngala Nfor as the National Chairman of the SCNC.

The SCNC was reportedly "organizing elections for a new executive" to take place on 29 December 2013 in Washington, DC (PRWeb 27 Dec. 2013). Further information on these elections could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.2 Activities

The SCNC describes itself as a non-violent movement (27 June 2012). Freedom House and Amnesty International also state that the SCNC is "non-violent" (Freedom House 2013, AI 2010).

The US Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012 indicates that the SCNC has organized protests (US 19 Apr. 2013, 19). Media sources state that the SCNC has created petitions (Africa Review 25 Nov. 2012; The Punch 26 Nov. 2012). Media sources also state that the SCNC has started introducing identity cards in the Northwest and Southwest Regions, of which 10,000 have already been distributed (ibid.; Africa Review 25 Nov. 2012). Further

information on SCNC activities could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

1.3 Treatment of Members by Government Authorities

The Cameroonian government has deemed the SCNC illegal (BBC 13 Feb. 2014; US 19 Apr. 2013, 19). Country Reports 2012 indicates that the SCNC "has never filed an application to become either a political party or other legally recognized organization" and does "not have legal status" (ibid.). Sources indicate that the government has recommended that the SCNC transform into a political party (Cameroon Post 23 Feb. 2014; Cameroon Oct. 2010, 36).

AI reports the "harassment" of SCNC members and indicates that they are denied the right to "freedom of association" (Jan. 2013, 1). The US Country Reports for the years 2010 to 2013 indicate that "[a]uthorities refused to grant the SCNC permission to hold rallies and meetings" (US 27 Feb. 2014, 16; ibid. 19 Apr. 2013, 18; ibid. 24 May 2012, 18; ibid. 8 Apr. 2011, 20). AI indicates that meetings in both public and private properties are prohibited (Jan. 2013, 23). Sources report the disruption of SCNC meetings by authorities (SCNC 8 Aug. 2013; US 27 Feb. 2014, 17). Country Reports 2013 reports that such disruptions are a result of a law prohibiting secessionist organizations and deeming meetings of such organizations "illegal" (ibid.). According to AI,

[d]uring discussions with Amnesty International in August 2010, various government officials, including government ministers, claimed that SCNC members were not persecuted or denied the right to express their views. However, when the organization pressed them on complaints by SCNC that they were constantly harassed, arrested, detained and prosecuted for holding meetings, the authorities responded that this was because the party was not legally constituted or recognized. During the discussions, the officials said that the existence of the SCNC was a violation of Cameroon's Constitution which prohibits any organization that espoused secessionist views and that there was no prospect of such views ever being accepted or the party ever attaining legal recognition in Cameroon. (Jan. 2013, 22)

Amnesty International reports that,

in its decision adopted during its 45th Ordinary Session held in Banjul, Gambia, in May 2009, the [African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights] found that the government of Cameroon had violated a number of the Articles of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in the actions it took against SCNC's members. The Commission found that the government of Cameroon had violated Article 2 (discrimination against people of Southern Cameroon), Article 4 (violation of the right to life during violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations), Article 5 (torture), Article 7 (right to a fair trial within reasonable time), Article 11 (right to assemble freely), Article 19 (right to equality of all people) and Article 26 (duty to guarantee the independence of the courts). The Commission also concluded that Cameroon had violated Article 1 of the ACHPR by failing to "adopt adequate measures to give effect to the provisions of the African Charter." (Jan. 2013, 22)

Several sources report arrests of SCNC activists, including in 2010 (PHW 2013), 2011 (US 24 May 2012, 22; AI 2012), 2012 (AI 2013), 2013 (SCNC 8 Aug. 2013; US 27 Feb. 2014, 20; SCNC 14 May 2013b), including:

On 8 August 2013, the SCNC reported the arrest and detention of 83 SCNC activists at a meeting, and indicated that the house in which the meeting was held was searched and "ransacked" (SCNC 8 Aug. 2013). Country Reports 2013 indicates that, in June 2013, in Kumbo, Northwest Region, during an SCNC meeting at a private residence, security forces arrested "more than 80 SCNC activists" (US 27 Feb. 2014, 20). Country Reports 2013 adds that the activists were released later that day (ibid.).

On 2 August 2013, UNPO reported that over 70 SCNC members were arrested by gendarmes and police forces while attending a meeting in Kumbo, and were "detained and tortured";

The SCNC reports that, on 20 April 2013, 15 SCNC activists were arrested and detained in Kumbo, Bui County of the Northern Zone by "elements of the Gendarmerie" (SCNC 14 May 2013b);

Sources indicate that, in February 2011, authorities arrested Chief Ayamba Ette Otun and other SCNC members (US 24 May 2012, 22; AI 2012). Country Reports 2011 states that they were arrested for "circulating tracts calling for the independence of Southern Cameroon and warning the government against the mistreatment of Southern Cameroonians" (US 24 May 2012, 22). AI reports that they were released without charge "several days later" (2012).

AI reports that some SCNC activists are "released without charge" while others are "charged with criminal offences - usually relating to holding illegal meetings" (Jan. 2013, 23).

Country Reports 2010 reports that the SCNC commemorates 1 October as "independence day for 'Southern Cameroons'" (US 8 Apr. 2011, 21). The UNPO reports that "[e]very year at the beginning of October - which marks the anniversary of the unification of Francophone and Anglophone parts of Cameroon - the SCNC activists are faced with a wave of arbitrary arrests and detention based on spurious charges" (UNPO Oct. 2012, 3). Several sources report on the arrest or other mistreatment of SCNC members and activists in the lead-up to the SCNC "independence day," including the following:

Country Reports 2012 states that, in October 2012, SCNC members were detained to prevent them from holding meetings (US 19 Apr. 2013, 19);

The SCNC reports that, on 1 October 2012, in Buea, SCNC leaders and activists were "brutalized" during a mass in a Catholic church (SCNC 8 Aug. 2013). AI reports that more than 100 SCNC members were arrested that day (Jan. 2013, 25);

Country Reports 2011 reports that, on 1 October 2011, "security forces disrupted SCNC meetings and protest rallies in Limbe, Tiko, Buea, Bamenda, and Kumbo. Security forces also sealed off the residences of several SCNC leaders and arrested and detained SCNC activists in Limbe, Buea, and Tiko" (US 24 May 2012, 22). AI reports that on 1 October 2011, security forces disrupted an SCNC meeting in Buea and arrested 50 people, who were released several days later without charge (2012);

Sources indicate that SCNC members were arrested at a rally in Buea on 1 October 2011 (UNPO 5 Oct. 2011; SCNC 3 Oct. 2011; AI Jan. 2013, 25). UNPO indicates that more than 200 people were arrested (5 Oct. 2011), while AI says 400 people were arrested (AI Jan. 2013, 25).

Country Reports 2010 states that, on 29 September 2010, five SCNC activists were arrested and detained briefly in Kumbo, North West Region, and one was arrested on 1 October 2010 in Tiko, South West Region (US 8 Apr. 2011, 25);

AI reports "judicial harassment" of SCNC members (Jan. 2013, 23), including the trial of "several dozen" SCNC members "arrested in 2008 and charged with holding illegal meetings and failing to produce identity cards" (2013). AI says that "the accused had appeared in court on more than 30 occasions but the trial was adjourned each time because of the failure of the prosecution to present witnesses or the absence of court officials, including presiding judges" (2013). The SCNC reports that the Tiko Magistrate Court "dismissed" the case against 24 SCNC activists who were arrested on 6 October 2008 (SCNC n.d.).

Country Reports 2013 notes that, in February 2013, in Buea, Southwest Region, a SCNC activist's residence was invaded by authorities "to prevent journalists from attending a press conference" (US 27 Feb. 2014, 20). Country Reports for 2011 and 2012 report on police surveillance of the houses of SCNC officials and activists to "monitor preparations" for Unification Day protests (US 19 Apr. 2013, 19; *ibid.* 24 May 2012, 12).

1.4 Membership Cards

Information on SCNC membership cards could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL)

The Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) [also known as "The Youth League" and "The League" (SCYL n.d.a)] states on its website that it "was founded on May 28, 1995 in the Federal Capital Territory of Buea" (*ibid.* n.d.b). The SCYL says that it is not a political party, and describes itself as a "non-profit political freedom-fighting organization" (*ibid.*). The SCYL indicates that it

was created with the unique mission of using all available civilized means including force to bring freedom to the suffering and persecuted people of the Southern Cameroons. To act as a forum where the voices of the stakeholders in the struggle for freedom and the vision of their country of tomorrow can be properly represented. (*ibid.* n.d.c)

The "Charter of the SCYL," which was adopted on 28 February 2010 in Brussels, Belgium, by the SCYL's national executive committee, indicates that the SCYL is determined to

liberate the Southern Cameroons with or without arm [sic] struggle for a distinct and independent identity ... to pursue its destiny according to its values, and to free the Southern Cameroons from socio politico and economic exploitation, oppression, suppression and neo-colonization. (*ibid.* Feb. 2010, 3)

For more information on the aims and objectives of the SCYL, refer to the charter of the SCYL in Attachment 1. The SCYL charter also indicates that "the political (SCYL) shall regulate the activities of the defense (SOCADEF) [Southern Cameroons Defense Force] wing to conform to the regulation of national defense in conflict situations as shall be defined under international law" (*ibid.*, 4).

The SCYL's motto is "[t]otal and [u]nconditional [i]ndependence" (ibid. n.d.b). According to undated information on the SCYL's website, the group has approximately 700,000 members (ibid.). For information on membership, including who can be a member, and the rights, duties and obligations of members, see Attachment 1.

International Crisis Group states that the SCYL, the South Cameroons Restoration Movement (SCARM) and the SCNC "are the "most prominent" of the groups that were formed in the 1990s calling for secession (25 May 2010, 22). International Crisis Group adds that the SCYL was "very active among Anglophone students in the 1990s" (ibid.).

According to a book by Piet Konings, a sociologist and honorary researcher at the African Studies Centre of the University of Leiden (African Studies Centre n.d.), published in 2009 by the African Studies Centre, entitled *Neoliberal Bandwagonism: Civil Society and the Politics of Belonging in Anglophone Cameroon*, the SCYL "has almost become a secret society for security purposes" (Konings 2009, 101). Konings noted that, during his fieldwork, he "received little information about the size, organisational set-up, weapons and plans of the SCYL [and] discovered later that most SCYL members lack this knowledge themselves and simply wait for instructions from their local leaders" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to the SCYL, it "is not, and has never been" the youth wing of the SCNC, and adds that it is also not the youth wing of any other movement in the "Southern Cameroons [c]ause" (SCYL n.d.b). The SCYL adds that the SCNC does not have a youth wing (ibid.). The SCYL states that the perception that they are the youth wing of the SCNC is due to their work with the SCNC and other organizations such as SCARM, AMBAZONIA, and SCAPO (ibid.). The SCYL states that "there is a problem" between the SCYL and the SCNC, and says that the SCNC "has become a fragmented and dishonored movement ..." (ibid.). According to Konings, the relationship between the SCNC and the SCYL has been "strained" (2009, 100). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.1 Organizational Structure and Leaders

The SCYL states that the main governing body of the organization is known as the "Revolutionary High Command Council" (SYCL n.d.a). The SCYL also says that the core of the movement lies in its "units" (ibid.).

According to the SCYL 2010 Charter,

[t]he following positions shall constitute the National Executive Council

- (i) The National Chairperson,
- (ii) SOCADEF: The Strategic Commander,
- (iii) The General Secretariat:

The National Secretary General,

The International Secretary

(iv) Department of Communication

The Spokesperson,

The Public Relations Officer,

The Press Secretary,

(v) The Nkapidem (Exchequer)

The National Financial Secretary,

The National Treasurer

(vi) The Roving Ambassador,

(vii) The National Legal Advisers.

(b) The SCYL Unit COCO [Command Council] is the lowest establishment of the SCYL. It shall constitute of districts. It shall consist of three to four villages and or hamlets. It must be represented at the County and Regional level by a representative. (ibid. Feb. 2010, 12)

For more information on the SCYL's organizational structure, see Attachment 1 and Attachment 2.

The SCYL indicates that Ebenezer Derek Mbongo Akwanga Jr. has been the leader of the group since July 1995 (SCYL n.d.d). An article in Upstream, "the international oil and gas newspaper" (Upstream n.d.), listed Ebenezer Akwanga as the chairman of the SCYL (ibid. 4 Apr. 2013). Akwanga reportedly resides in the United States, according to undated information on the SCYL website (SCYL n.d.d). Undated information on the SCYL website lists Lucas Cho Ayaba as the secretary-general of the SCYL, and Benedict Nwana Kuah as the organization's strategic commander (SCYL n.d.e).

2.2 Membership cards

According to the SCYL website, all SCYL membership cards are issued by the Secretariat (SCYL n.d.b). Further information about SCYL membership cards could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2.3 Activities and Treatment of SCYL Members by the Government

According to the 2009 book by Piet Konings about Anglophone political engagement in Cameroon,

[t]he SCYL leadership in exile has discovered the importance of the Internet, using it to raise Anglophone consciousness and promote the visibility of the Anglophone cause in the Cameroonian and international community, thus frustrating the regular attempts of the Francophone-dominated state to control information to the outside world and cover up its frequently brutal repression of

SCNC and SCYL actions. The Cameroonian government still sees the SCYL as the most dangerous Anglophone movement. It has therefore become the main target not only of the security forces but also of the newly created youth militia [President Biya's Youths (PRESBY)]. (102)

Further and corroborating information on the treatment of SCYL members by government authorities and SCYL activities could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the following individuals and organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: six representatives of Ambazonia in Maryland, US; Ebenezer Akwanga Human Rights and Humanitarian Institute; SCYL; SCNC Coordinator for the Centre Region. A professor of anthropology at University College London was unable to provide information for this Response.

Internet sites, including: AllAfrica.com; Bamenda Online; Cameroon - Prime Minister's Office; Cameroon Daily Journal; Cameroon Tribune; ecoi.net; Human Rights Watch; Institute for Cultural

Diplomacy; Jamestown Foundation; United Nations - Refworld; World Organization Against Torture.

Attachments

1. Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL). February 2010. National Secretariat of the SCYL. Charter of the Southern Cameroons Youth League [SCYL]. [Accessed 7 Mar. 2014]
2. Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL). N.d.a. "Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) Organigram." [Accessed 6 Mar. 2014]

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