

# GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX 2025: CAMEROON FACTSHEET

## OVERALL GLOBAL TORTURE INDEX SCORE:

**HIGH RISK**

The Global Torture Index 2025 is the first analysis designed to assess the risk of torture and ill-treatment across 26 countries worldwide. This 2025 factsheet for Cameroon includes an analysis of the country's overall performance, a breakdown by thematic pillars and key recommendations for driving meaningful change in the fight against torture and the promotion of human rights.

## COLLABORATING ORGANISATIONS IN CAMEROON:

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The Centre for Human Rights and  
Democracy in Africa (CHRDA)

Le Réseau Camerounais des Organisations  
des Droits de l'homme (RECODH)

## AT A GLANCE

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Cameroon's human rights crisis stems not only from ongoing armed conflicts or counterterrorism efforts, but from a deeply entrenched culture of impunity, a lack of judicial independence and the systematic erosion of the rule of law. Over the years, civic space has steadily closed, with journalists, human rights defenders and political opponents increasingly targeted through arbitrary arrests, prolonged detention and acts of torture. Police brutality is widespread—routinely reported during demonstrations, in police custody and within the operations of intelligence services.

Since 2014, the country has grappled with a severe security crisis deepened by the Boko Haram insurgency and the Anglophone crisis that erupted in 2016. These ongoing conflicts have generated widespread human rights violations perpetrated by both government security forces and non-state armed groups, resulting in at least 6,000 civilian deaths and [hundreds of torture cases](#). For 2025, the Global Torture Index classifies the country as facing a **high risk** of torture and ill-treatment, based on data collected in 2023 and 2024.

Torture has emerged as a tool that state forces routinely employ, justifying its use under expansive anti-terrorism measures, such as [Law No. 2014/028](#). This legislation has facilitated a climate of impunity, allowing security and intelligence forces to carry out abuses with minimal accountability and to try civilians before military courts, in violation of international standards.

In early 2024, violence continued in the English-speaking North-West and South-West regions. **By mid-2023, over 638,000 people were internally displaced within these areas, and at least 1.7 million required humanitarian assistance.** Security forces regularly target entire communities and [individuals suspected of supporting separatist groups](#), including human rights defenders, civil society activists, journalists and political opponents.

Despite its formal prohibition, **torture has become a mainstay of state control in Cameroon, being tolerated—and at times encouraged—by authorities**, according to the OMCT. This is facilitated by a lack of judicial independence, weak accountability and a failing of the rule of law. Detention conditions are dire, **with prisons exceeding 600% capacity and widespread abuse of pre-trial detention.** In 2023, the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) recorded [200 cases of torture, 500 arbitrary arrests, and 25 rapes against civilians](#), reflecting the scale of state-sanctioned violence.

In its November 2024 review, the UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT) expressed deep concerns regarding torture practices linked to counterterrorism operations, arbitrary detentions and abuses against marginalised communities. Issues such as prison overcrowding, lack of safeguards for detainees, insufficient investigations into custodial deaths and widespread gender-based violence further highlight the grave situation. With elections approaching in 2025, fears persist about increased repression against dissenting voices, underscoring the urgent need for meaningful action and accountability.

## GENERAL INFORMATION



**Type of government:**  
Presidential Republic



**United Nations Convention Against Torture:**  
Ratified



**OPCAT ratification:**  
Not ratified



**Population:**  
[29.694.358](#)



**People deprived of liberty:**  
34,419



**Prison population (per 100,000 of national population):**  
118



**Pre-trial detainees / remand prisoners (percentage of prison population):**  
55.5%



**Documented Detained Human Rights Defenders:**  
No data



**Alerts Issued by the Observatory for Human Rights Defenders in 2024:**  
1



**Prison Occupancy level:**  
164.3%



**Homicide rate (per 100.000 people):**  
4.5

## THEMATIC PILLAR OVERVIEW



### I. POLITICAL COMMITMENT

**INDEX SCORE: CONSIDERABLE RISK**

Cameroon has ratified the Convention against Torture (CAT) and is one of the States reporting the most to the UNCAT, but its commitment to fully implement the CAT remains insufficient. The criminal code provides penalties for acts of torture which can be reduced to as little as 1 year's imprisonment upon a judicial finding of mitigating circumstances. Despite the UNCAT urging the State to make the crime of torture punishable by appropriate penalties since 2010, Cameroon has still not taken any measures. **The country did sign the Optional Protocol to the CAT in 2009, but has still not ratified it, despite repeated commitment by the Cameroonian authorities to do so.** Moreover, the State has frequently rejected or ignored treaty bodies and UPR recommendations related to the abolition of the death penalty and to the protection of LGBTQIA+ people.

**Transparency is significantly lacking, as authorities neither systematically collect nor publish disaggregated data on torture incidents.** In practice, state forces routinely detain and subject individuals, especially [those perceived as sympathetic to Anglophone separatists](#), to torture and degrading treatment. The UNCAT also shared [concerns about Cameroon's military courts' jurisdiction over civilians](#), in violation of international human rights standards.

Despite the CAT calling on Cameroon to adopt a general law on violence against women and ensure that domestic violence—including spousal rape—is made a specific offence, these recommendations have not been implemented. Finally, the [last Universal Periodic Review](#) highlighted the need to strengthen the capacity of the Interministerial Committee in charge of monitoring and implementing international recommendations, thereby improving coordination, accountability and compliance with international human rights obligations.



## II. ENDING POLICE BRUTALITY AND INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE

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**INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK**

**Police brutality in Cameroon is frequently characterised by excessive force during arrests, detentions and public demonstrations.** It is typically met with widespread impunity, underscored by emblematic cases like the 2020 death of journalist Samuel Wazizi, allegedly tortured in military custody; a case that has not yet been prosecuted. It may also be highlighted the November 2024 case of Barrister Tamfu, who was molested by a squad of national gendarmerie while contesting the arbitrary arrest of his client.

In the Anglophone regions, **law enforcement has become intertwined with an armed conflict between security forces and separatist groups**, leading to excessive and often lethal use of force against civilians. Between 2023 and 2024, at least **thirty people were killed during documented military operations**, including extrajudicial executions and acts of reprisal in the north and southwest regions, with bodies burned on site. This violence, accompanied by acts of torture and village burnings, reflects a persistent climate of insecurity for civilian populations who are caught between security forces and armed groups.

From 2022 to 2023, **the police complaints hotline received approximately 179 reports of human rights violations by officers**, resulting in only a few suspensions. There is no independent complaints mechanism or effective oversight. The use of firearms and crowd control weapons by law enforcement is not transparently regulated. Victims often face threats and reprisals if they attempt to seek justice, especially in politically sensitive cases.

In 2024, the publication of a video showing the artist Simon Lonkana Agno (Longuè Longuè) being subjected to torture, highlights ongoing abuses linked to the Military Security (SEMIL). The SOS-Torture Judicial Intervention Group (GIJ) has filed several individual communications to the UNCAT denouncing the systemic failure to prosecute offenders. The case is viewed as a key opportunity for Cameroonian institutions to rebuild public trust by ensuring thorough investigations, holding perpetrators accountable and offering reparations to victims.



### III. FREEDOM FROM TORTURE WHILE DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY

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**INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK**

**Conditions in detention centres are extremely harsh, with overcrowding, inadequate medical care and poor sanitation reported.** Pretrial detention is overused, and people can be held for years without trial.

**Torture is frequently used to extract confessions, particularly by the military and gendarmerie, and access to legal counsel is often denied.** The lack of effective judicial control or independent medical examinations further aggravates abuse. There are no disaggregated figures available for deaths in custody or torture complaints.

The UNCAT has expressed grave [concerns about the high incidence of deaths, including violent deaths](#), attributed to torture and inadequate healthcare in Cameroon's detention facilities. According to the Cameroon Human Rights Commission, **overcrowding has sharply increased, with inmate numbers surpassing capacity by over 21.5% between 2019 and 2024.** Chronic judicial delays and severe staffing shortages, with ratios reaching up to 1,000 inmates per guard, further compromise humane management. Additionally, closures of key prisons due to ongoing security crises have reduced operational facilities, further deepening the crisis and the systemic issues within Cameroon's penitentiary system. Finally, the lack of access of human rights NGOs with a mandate to visit places of detention and the lack of resources and capacity of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and the Sub-commission on the Prevention of Torture to effectively fulfil their mandate hinders the ability to ensure that detained individuals are treated with respect and dignity.



### IV. ENDING IMPUNITY

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**INDEX SCORE: VERY HIGH RISK**

Cameroon's legal framework criminalises torture, but enforcement is weak. **Torture-related crimes are rarely prosecuted, and only a small number of perpetrators are convicted.** For example, in 2022, only 1 known case from among dozens of allegations resulted in a conviction. Amnesties and political interference are frequently used to shield perpetrators, especially in conflict zones like the Anglophone regions or the Far North.

Martínez Zogo was abducted in January 2023, and his body was subsequently discovered. Although an investigation was initiated, [a year later significant aspects remain unresolved, including identification of the murder site](#), completion of phone data analyses and clarification of the roles played by the primary suspects. The removal of two judges from the case, one after seeking to release prominent suspects such as former DGRE head Eko Eko, highlights the considerable hurdles obstructing justice in the journalist's killing.

Cameroon has repeatedly disregarded international human rights rulings, including the UN Human Rights Committee's 2007 decision in [Njaru v. Cameroon](#), that ordered a thorough investigation and reparations for the repeated torture and arbitrary arrests faced by journalist Philip Njaru, which remain unaddressed. **Ongoing patterns of neglect further highlight authorities' refusal to investigate complaints, sustaining an environment of impunity for torture and abuses.**



## V. VICTIM'S RIGHTS

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**INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK**

There is **no comprehensive law guaranteeing the rights of torture victims to rehabilitation, reparation or restitution**. Victims have no access to psychological support or medical care following torture, and compensation is rarely awarded. Victims who seek redress often face intimidation, and there are no functioning protection mechanisms in place for witnesses or whistleblowers.

Training for police, judicial and health professionals on working with torture survivors is rare or non-existent. **Victims are frequently retraumatised during investigations and trials**, with few safeguards in place to protect their dignity or privacy.

Since 2016, severe violence has engulfed Cameroon's Anglophone North-West and South-West regions, characterised by grave human rights violations perpetrated by both separatist groups and government forces. A particularly severe incident took place on February 14, 2020, when Cameroonian soldiers, accompanied by armed Fulani militia, attacked the village of Ngarbuh. **They killed at least 21 civilians, including 13 children, and set homes ablaze**. A military trial, which began in December 2020, has faced significant delays, a lack of transparency, and restricted participation of victims. Senior officials remain uncharged, and several suspects are still evading capture. There remain substantial concerns regarding the likelihood of achieving justice.



## VI. PROTECTION FOR ALL

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**INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK**

Marginalised groups, including women, children, LGBTQIA+ persons and ethnic minorities are particularly vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment. Legislation does not sufficiently protect against gender-based torture. **Female detainees report sexual violence and degrading treatment**, yet such acts are underreported due to stigma and lack of support mechanisms. Furthermore, prison facilities are ill-equipped to handle these vulnerable groups.

In 2022, **Cameroon introduced a national strategy aiming to reduce gender-based violence by 50% by 2026, alongside a national action plan against female genital mutilation**. Despite these initiatives, feminicides in Cameroon have increased over the past three years: 57 cases were recorded in 2023, rising by 33% to 76 in 2024. In 2025, 28 feminicides have already been documented by mid-year, suggesting that the high level of gender-based killings is persisting. [State resources and services](#) to fight against gender-based violence are insufficient, hindering effective implementation and adequate support for survivors. Abortion remains restricted, [permitted only if the mother's health is endangered](#) or the pregnancy results from rape; violations lead to imprisonment.

[Military forces often detain and torture civilians in the Anglophone regions](#) based on mere suspicions of support for separatists, which can lead to abuses including sexual violence.



## VII. RIGHT TO DEFEND AND CIVIC SPACE

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### INDEX SCORE: HIGH RISK

Civic space is under severe threat in Cameroon. **The legal framework criminalises defamation and peaceful dissent, and protests are frequently met with violence, especially in the context of elections.** Human rights defenders (HRDs), lawyers and journalists face constant surveillance, harassment, arbitrary detention, torture and even murder.

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 Ebala. These cases highlight the severe repression of dissident voices. In August 2024, Cameroon's authorities and security forces forcibly disappeared and apparently tortured Ramon Cotta, a social media activist accused of terrorism who remains in arbitrary detention to this day. Recent killings of journalists and activists, such as Jean-Jacques Ola Bebe and Anye Nde Nsoh, and Martinez Zogo remain unresolved.

In September 2024, **freelance journalist Kingsley Fumunyuy Njoka was sentenced to 10 years in prison for 'secession' after spending more than four years in pre-trial detention**—a case condemned by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) as a direct assault on press freedom. Long-standing journalist Amadou Vamouké received a total of 32 years in prison after 178 trial postponements and two convictions for alleged public fund mismanagement. Other journalists, including Dimitri Wassouom Tchatchoua (sentenced in 2023), and Thomas Awah Junior (sentenced in 2018), remain imprisoned for charges tied to their reporting. In 2024 alone, several others—such as Bruno Bidjang, Thierry Patrick Ondoua and Nsoyuka Guy-Bruno Maimo—faced arrest, violence or censorship. Media bans on topics like President Biya's health, and administrative detention of reporters, further illustrate a climate of fear and repression. Cameroon ranked 130th out of 180 in RSF's 2024 World Press Freedom Index.

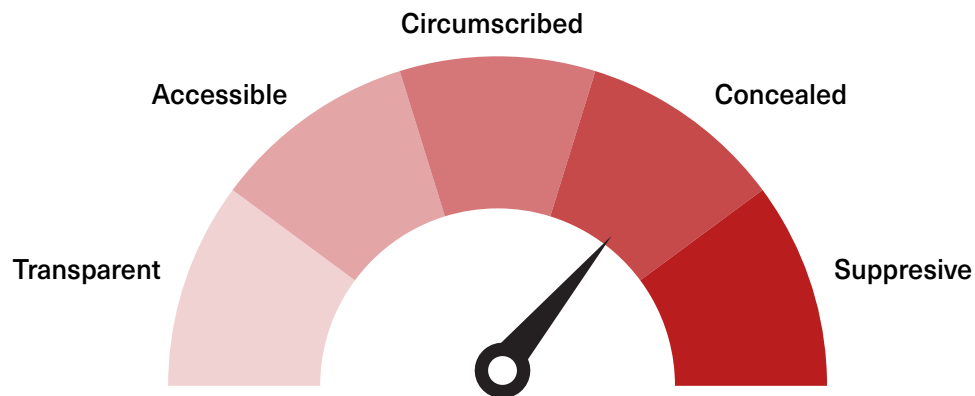
Additionally, the government's recent suspension of several civil society organisations, including the [Central Africa Human Rights Defenders Network \(REDHAC\)](#), citing questionable allegations of funding irregularities and legal non-compliance, further reflects a broader crackdown on civil society, media freedom and political opposition.

# TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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The Global Torture Index rates the access to information and transparency available in each country when measuring and assessing the risks of torture and ill-treatment. It considers the availability of information, as well as the obstacles faced by civil society organisations in collecting data and their ability to access it. Data access must be guaranteed in every society, both in law and in practice, to ensure state transparency and accountability. It enables organisations, journalists and individuals to request information on public bodies, protocols and statistics on human rights violations. This indicator reflects the challenges in accessing information within a country, with each country and territory assigned a rating as Suppressive, Concealed, Circumscribed, Accessible or Transparent.

Cameroon's score is **concealed**, based on our evaluation of its current level of transparency and access to information.



# ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE IN CAMEROON: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Index includes 5 recommendations for Cameroon, taken from the [Index webpage](#), which will serve as references in upcoming editions to monitor achievements within the anti-torture movement.

1. Empower the National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) established within the National Human Rights Institution by taking concrete steps to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), establish sustained communication with UN mechanisms, and align the structure and operation of the NPM with binding international standards outlined in OPCAT.
2. Strengthen the legal framework to combat torture by advancing a dedicated bill on torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (CIDT), and adopting a national policy and action plan for prevention and protection, in line with the State's international and regional commitments.
3. Ensure access to redress and rehabilitation mechanisms for victims of torture and ill-treatment. National legislation should guarantee victim identification, support, and rehabilitation based on the principles of non-discrimination, accessibility, accountability, and victim-centred care. Public officials should actively promote awareness, including commemorating the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture.
4. Combat impunity by ensuring comprehensive, impartial, and independent investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment, and by prosecuting and appropriately sanctioning perpetrators. Security force members must not operate under a culture of immunity.
5. Improve forensic services by ensuring adequate numbers of medico-legal experts trained in human rights and the Istanbul and Minnesota Protocols. Provide prosecutors with independence and resources to investigate torture cases effectively. Safeguard judges from external interference in line with UN principles on judicial independence.



## FURTHER RESOURCES

For further information, the complete 2025 Torture Index—including detailed data visualisations, FAQs, the methodology, and more—can be accessed on our website: <https://www.omct.org/en/global-torture-index>. Should you have any questions, feel free to reach out to us at [tortureindex@omct.org](mailto:tortureindex@omct.org).

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