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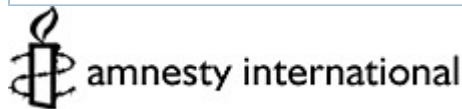
Cameroon

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Amnesty International Report 2010 - The State of the World's Human Rights

Head of state **Paul Biya**

Head of government **Philémon Yang** (replaced Ephraim Inoni in June)

Death penalty **abolitionist in practice**

Population **19.5 million**

Life expectancy **50.9 years**

Under-5 mortality (m/f) **151/136 per 1,000**

Adult literacy **67.9 per cent**

Government opponents, journalists and human rights defenders were arrested, detained and tried for offences relating to criticism of the government or its officials. At least one man was detained for alleged same-sex sexual activities. Detention conditions remained harsh and often life-threatening. Members of the security forces implicated in human rights violations in February 2008 continued to enjoy impunity. An unknown number of prisoners were on death row.

Background

In June, President Paul Biya replaced Prime Minister Ephraim Inoni with Philémon Yang in a government reshuffle.

President Biya appointed a new electoral commission to prepare for general elections in 2011. Opposition political parties and civil society organizations called for a reform of the electoral commission known as Election Cameroon (ELECAM). Critics of the government said that the commission was dominated by supporters of the ruling Democratic Rally of the Cameroonian People (Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camérounais, RDPC).

Arrests, detentions and trials continued of former government officials and heads of government-owned companies accused of corruption. In August, the National Anti-Corruption Commission published a report accusing 47 Ministry of Agriculture officials of embezzling funds for maize production. In September, a local NGO, the Citizen Association for the Defence of Collective Interests, lodged a complaint before the High Court against the 47 officials.

Political prisoners

- The trial of John Fru Ndi, leader of the Social Democratic Front political party, and at least 20 others charged with involvement in the murder of Grégoire Diboulé in 2006, was repeatedly adjourned and did not take place.
- In June, the Court of Appeal in Douala confirmed the conviction and sentence against musician and

political activist Pierre Lambo Sandjo by the High Court in 2008. He was convicted of taking part in the February 2008 riots and sentenced to three years in prison.

Freedom of association

Members of the Anglophone Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), a non-violent secessionist group, continued to face arrest and imprisonment.

- In February, the police in Tiko, Southwest Province, arrested and briefly detained 25 SCNC members who had gone to a court to support fellow members on trial for holding an illegal meeting in October 2008.
- In March, seven SCNC members were arrested and detained on suspicion of holding an illegal meeting. They were provisionally released on 2 April.
- In May, the High Court in Mamfe, Southwest Province, found three SCNC leaders – including its national chairman, Nfor Ngala Nfor – guilty of belonging to a foreign organization not recognized in Cameroon and sentenced them to five months' imprisonment. The three had been awaiting trial since September 2002 when they were arrested on their return from Nigeria, where they had gone to gather support for their organization's political objectives. The court agreed with the prosecution that the SCNC was not recognized in Cameroon and was therefore an unregistered foreign organization and its members liable to prosecution under the Penal Code.

Freedom of expression – journalists and human rights defenders

The government continued to muzzle critics of its policies, including journalists and human rights defenders.

- Lewis Medjo, director of La Détente Libre newspaper, has sentenced to three years' imprisonment in January. He was found guilty of "publishing false news" on account of an article alleging that President Biya was planning to force the resignation of the President of the Supreme Court.
- In June, journalists Jacques Blaise Mvié and Charles René Nwé of La Nouvelle newspaper were sentenced in their absence to five years' imprisonment after the military court in Yaoundé found them guilty of insulting a government official and divulging defence secrets. The trial related to an article in the newspaper alleging that the Minister of Defence had been involved in a plot to overthrow the government.
- In December, Jean-Bosco Talla of Germinal newspaper was arrested and charged with insulting President Biya. Germinal had published an extract from a banned book that alleges that President Biya and his predecessor, Ahmadou Ahidjo, had entered into a political pact sealed by a homosexual act. On 28 December, the High Court found Jean-Bosco Tallaguiltly and sentenced him to a suspended one-year prison term and a fine, and ordered him to pay costs amounting to 3,154,600 CFA francs (about US\$7,000). He remained in custody at the end of the year because he failed to pay the fine. Earlier, in July, Jean-Bosco Talla had received anonymous telephone death threats after Germinal published a report alleging that President Biya had corruptly acquired properties in France.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

The Penal Code criminalizes same-sex sexual relations.

In July, leaders of the Roman Catholic Church organized a demonstration in Douala to protest against Cameroon's adoption in May of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, known as the Maputo Protocol, which guarantees comprehensive rights to women. The church leaders accused the government of legalizing abortion and homosexuality by adopting the Protocol.

- Yves Noe Ewane was arrested in May and charged with engaging in homosexual acts. He initially denied the charge but was reported to have been forced to admit to the offence after he was kept naked for several days and denied visits by his relatives. He was released in September.

Prison conditions

Conditions in prisons around the country continued to be harsh and life-threatening. In a report published in August, the government's National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms stated that as many as five prisoners died each year due to lack of medical attention and poor hygiene. The Commission also expressed concern at the long-term detention without trial of up to 62 per cent of the prison population, with some having

been held for nine years.

Detention centres continued to be insecure and unsafe.

- In Bamenda prison in January, many detainees were injured during a mutiny by inmates. In March, 10 inmates, including two on death row and eight convicted of rape or armed robbery, escaped.
- In June, up to 50 inmates escaped from Yagona prison in Extreme-North province. Most were recaptured but nearly 20 were still at large at the end of the year. A further 18 inmates escaped from Meri prison in the same province.

Impunity

The government appeared not to have taken any administrative or judicial measures to investigate the unlawful killings and other human rights violations perpetrated by the security forces against civilians during violent protests in February 2008. Those who ordered or carried out the violations remained unaccountable and victims did not receive any form of redress.

Death penalty

An unknown number of prisoners were on death row. They included Jérôme Youta, who was convicted in 1999 of killing his father in a trial that he and his legal counsel said was unfair. It was unclear how many people were sentenced to death during 2009. The last known execution was in 1997.

Amnesty International visits/report

Responding to an Amnesty International report issued in January, the government denied that it had previously impeded visits by Amnesty International delegates and undertook to facilitate a visit by the organization in early 2010.

[Cameroon: Impunity underpins persistent abuse](#) (29 January 2009)

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