

## **Fact-finding mission to Cameroon 23/1-3/2 2001**

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## **1. Background to the mission**

In recent years, a number of factors have made it difficult for the Danish Immigration Service and the Refugee Board to process asylum applications from Cameroonian citizens. The main reason may be that the human rights and political situation in Cameroon has changed somewhat since the time of the election in 1997. Moreover, Cameroonian asylum applicants' reasons for seeking asylum abroad, including in Denmark, are now of a more complex and apparently of a more serious nature than was previously generally the case.

Some applicants claim to have been subjected to torture and other violence while in the custody of the Cameroonian authorities. A feature of a number of applications has also been that the reasons given for seeking asylum cannot immediately be explained or verified on the basis of available background information on the human rights and political situation in Cameroon.

The Immigration Service therefore decided to carry out a fact-finding mission to Cameroon. The mission took place from 23 January to 3 February 2001. During their stay in Cameroon, the delegation visited the cities of Douala and Yaoundé. Further to the visit to Cameroon, the Immigration Service made a short visit from 14 to 15 February 2001 to the Paris head office of the human rights organisation Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (NDH).

### **1.1 Structure of the report**

The vast majority of Cameroonian asylum applicants in Denmark state that their reason for seeking asylum is membership of or activities for political opposition parties, separatist movements or human rights organisations. Sections 4 and 5 of this report contain a more detailed presentation of some of the more prominent organisations, parties and movements. Section 6 covers the human rights situation for a number of population groups, organisations and movements, including conditions for those held in detention and in prison. Section 7 covers the police, the judicial system and law and order in general, including the likelihood of a fair trial. Section 8 deals with departure from and arrival at Cameroon's airports. Sections 9 and 10 cover official documents and privately issued documents, including the circumstances under which they are issued and forgeries.

## **2. Introduction**

Cameroon was a one-party state until 1990, when public pressure and political unrest forced President Paul Biya to recommend that parliamentary government be introduced the same year. Thus in the 1990s, as in a number of other sub-Saharan African countries, Cameroon underwent a formal political democratisation process, i.e. a development from a one-party state to parliamentary government.

On 5 December 1990 the National Assembly adopted a law on the introduction of a multi-party system. There are about 150 registered political parties in Cameroon, the vast majority of which are of no political significance. Only seven of these parties are represented in parliament. Three of them only have one seat each of the 180 seats in the National Assembly. The ruling party, the Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais

(RDPC) has 116 seats, while the largest opposition party, the Social Democratic Front (SDF), has 43. The other parties, the Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (UNDP) and the Union Démocratique du Cameroun (UDC) have thirteen and five respectively.

A large number of human rights organisations and NGOs have also been established. These parties and organisations are mostly registered as legal in Cameroon.

Besides the registered parties and organisations, there are a smaller number of organisations or movements which are not registered with the authorities, and which can therefore not be regarded as legal. These include separatist movements, whose political aim is secession and the international recognition of national independence for the English-speaking part of Cameroon, i.e. the north- and south-western parts of Cameroon (a map of Cameroon is attached as Annex 1). This area was previously under British rule and was administered as part of the former British colony of Nigeria. Practically all the sources consulted by the delegation said that the separatist movements were not armed rebel groups, but more or less marginal and divided groups whose radical demands for the secession of the English-speaking part of Cameroon no longer had much support from Cameroon's English speakers.

As is the case in many other central African countries, a feature of Cameroon is the interplay of opposed and divided political and ethnic forces. The main result of this is that the country is difficult to govern. There have been attempts to unite the country politically ever since the British (i.e. western) and French (i.e. eastern) parts were united in 1961 under the name "The Federal Republic of Cameroon". On 20 May 1972 the country's official name was changed to "The United Republic of Cameroon". The change of Cameroon's official name again in 1984, to "The Republic of Cameroon", caused anger amongst many English speakers in the country. This change took place without a prior referendum.

Since then, there have been times where there has been political tension between English and French speakers in Cameroon. This has been reflected in, for instance, the formation of opposition parties and movements which to a large extent win their support from the English speaking population. These tensions came to a head at the time of the elections in 1992 and 1997, when there were several cases of violent conflict between the government and the English speaking opposition.

### **3. Comments on methods and sources**

The Immigration Service identified a number of key sources in Cameroon before the mission. The British High Commission in Yaoundé and the British Consulate in Douala helped the delegation to identify several further sources. Finally, a number of worthwhile sources were identified by the mission during its stay in Cameroon.

Section 11 of the report lists all the individuals, organisations, authorities and diplomats consulted by the delegation during its stay in Cameroon. Section 12 contains a bibliography of the written sources used in the report. So as to give the reader a basis on which to judge the report's non-written sources there follows a brief account of the sources consulted by

the delegation in Cameroon.

The human rights organisation Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (ACAT) has followed developments in the human rights field in Cameroon for a number of years. The ACAT contributes information on the human rights situation to, inter alia, the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) Country Reports on Cameroon. A western diplomatic source described ACAT as a particularly credible and balanced source.

Conscience Africaine (CA), which is part of the umbrella organisation Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (NDH), was described by representatives of the independent press as one of Cameroon's most credible human rights organisations. CA receives financial support for its democratisation and human rights projects from several western countries, including the USA, the UK, the Netherlands, France and Japan, and the organisation works with NGOs in both the USA and Europe. The NDH has its headquarters in Paris. Shortly after its return from Cameroon the delegation visited that office in order to collect additional information.

The Catholic organisation Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Cameroun (CENC) is a well-known observer and critic of the human rights situation in Cameroon. The CENC watches the human rights situation in the country closely and has repeatedly criticised the authorities in public for human rights violations, corruption and abuse of political power. The Secretary General of the CENC, Abbot Patrick Lafon, was consulted in Yaoundé. The delegation was not able to meet CENC's leader, Cardinal Tumi. The head of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Harald Bammel, recommended that the delegation should meet Patrick Lafon, as the CENC has been following political developments in Cameroon.

Two lawyers, Maurice Nkouendjin-Yotnda and Akere T. Muna were consulted on the recommendation of western embassies in Yaoundé. Harald Bammel described Nkouendjin-Yotnda as a serious and credible lawyer, and Hilaire Kamga described Muna in the same way.

Nkouendjin-Yotnda and Muna work as independent lawyers in Yaoundé. Nkouendjin-Yotnda is a professor of constitutional law. He was trained as a lawyer in France, where he has also taught for a number of years. As a lawyer he covers many types of case including those involving human rights. Amongst other things, Nkouendjin-Yotnda is an expert in international military criminal law and military law. Muna is the chairman of the lawyer's association in Cameroon and was formerly a member of the SDF opposition party. He was a Commonwealth election observer at the elections on Zanzibar in January 2001.

The delegation held meetings with the SDF in both Douala and Yaoundé. The mayor and SDF leader in Douala, Dr. Léolein Nja Kwa, who is a long-standing member of the SDF, was described to us by the British Embassy's representative in Douala as a balanced and especially credible source of information on the situation of the political opposition and the human rights situation generally. The delegation did not meet the SDF's Chairman John Fru Ndi, but in Yaoundé it met the Vice-Chairman, Secretary General T. Asonganyi. The SDF is by far the largest and most significant opposition party in Cameroon. The party is a member of the international social democratic movement, the Socialist International.

The editors of two prominent independent newspapers, the Messenger and the Post, were consulted, partly to shed light on the conditions under which the independent press and journalists in Cameroon operate, but also to collect information on the human rights situation etc, to which this section of the press pays close and critical attention. Hilaire Kamga and a western diplomatic source recommended the two editors mentioned above as sources of information on the political and human rights situation in Cameroon.

The delegation consulted the German NGO, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) in Yaoundé. The organisation has been in Cameroon for 13 years. FES is not a human rights organisation as such, since its work involves, inter alia, supporting the political opposition in promoting democracy. Initially, the FES worked to support academic research, but nowadays it follows political developments closely and, amongst other things, supports work against corruption in Cameroon. The FES has published a comprehensive report on corruption and its nature in the country. Harald Bammel, the resident representative, and Chinje B. Shira, the programme manager of the FES in Yaoundé, informed us that the FES had close links with the German social democratic party, the SDP, and therefore also with its counterpart, the SDF in Cameroon.

In its decree No 90/459 of 8 November 1990 the Cameroonian Government set up a national human rights commission, the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF). The Commission's tasks are to receive complaints about human rights violations, to report on them to the President of Cameroon and other competent authorities, to visit every detention centre and prison, to propose initiatives in the human rights field and to run courses in human rights. The Commission started work in February 1992.

The NCHRF itself reported that initially, in some cases, it had had problems in operating independently of the Government, but that these problems had been surmounted several years ago. However, some sources, including the editors of the Post and the Messenger, believed that the NCHRF could not work independently of the Government, and was to some extent a government tool. On the other hand, the FES and western diplomats regarded the NCHRF as a seriously functioning commission, which despite the Government's support or lack thereof, was making an effort to work independently of the Government.

The delegation met the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Commission. Both provided the delegation with information without any reservations, and passed on a number of reports etc published by the Commission and documents from several private human rights organisations.

Finally, the delegation consulted five western representations in Douala and Yaoundé.

All the sources consulted by the delegation were informed that the delegation's mission report was public, that it would be published with sources named, and that it would then be translated into English with a view to international distribution. Except for certain diplomatic sources, none of the sources used by the delegation had any reservations about allowing their comments and information to be included in the delegation's report.

## **4. Political opposition parties and separatist movements**

### **4.1 Generally**

By far the largest opposition party in Cameroon is the social democratic SDF, which is the only party to play a major role in the political opposition. At the last parliamentary elections in 1997, the SDF won 43 seats in parliament. International observers and the SDF itself believed that the SDF was cheated of electoral victory in the presidential elections in 1992. A total of eight candidates stood in the presidential election in October 1997. However, the SDF, the UNDP and the UDC boycotted the election, and the official election result was that President Paul Biya received 92,6% of the vote. In January 1998 Biya formed a "Government of National Unity" consisting of the governing RDPC together with the UNDP, the Union des Populations Camerounaises (UPC) and the Nouvelle Coalition (NC) .

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Outlook for 2001-2002, the opposition in Cameroon is weak and splintered. The SDF's traditional ally in opposition, the UDC, has shown signs of drawing closer to the Government, and the SDF is internally divided. The English-speaking separatist movement, the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) is increasingly isolated because of decreasing support for the separatist cause as a whole. The EIU therefore believes that President Biya will remain firmly in office in Cameroon and has no interest in changing the status quo. His term expires in 2004 .

Patrick Lafon regretted that the democratisation of Cameroonian society was so difficult. Since France had significant interests in the Cameroonian oil industry, it feared the SDF opposition party coming to power. France therefore accepted Paul Biya as President, despite the SDF's victory in the 1992 presidential elections. If France were to express a wish that Biya should stand down in favour of a "democratically elected president", he would do so voluntarily.

Harald Bammel and Chinje B. Shira said that morale within the political opposition was at a very low point. No-one believed that future elections would bring changes to the country, and the people had lost their faith in the opposition. This had definitely made life easier for the Government. Frustration amongst the population and the opposition had not had the effect of strengthening the radical opposition in Cameroon. There was a general atmosphere of political resignation in the country.

Bammel and Shira reported that the next presidential election was due to take place in September or October 2004, and that parliamentary elections were due in January 2002. However, several sources expressed doubts about this timetable. Bammel and Shira, along with most other sources, expected serious political tension in Cameroon in the run up to those elections, and that this would also contribute to a worsening of the human rights situation.

Bammel and Shira added that during election periods it was quite normal for the authorities to refuse to allow people to register as electors purely on political grounds, or cheat with registrations. This often affected English speakers and the bamiléké, who traditionally supported the SDF. The bamiléké were French speakers who had a dominant economic

position in the country. Fraud usually took place in connection with the registration of voters rather than the conduct of the vote itself. Up to a quarter of potential electors could be denied registration. Shira had himself been refused registration as an elector.

Asked whether the radical part of the opposition - i.e. the English-speaking separatists - would be able to play a greater political role in future, Bammel and Shira explained that that part of the opposition constituted an extreme minority and did not have a political agenda. Those who were fighting actively for the secession of English speaking Cameroon were a very small minority. However, there was a widespread belief that English speakers were marginalised at all levels of society, both socially, politically and economically. Even English speaking members of the Government were politically marginalised. The Cameroonian Prime Minister came from the English speaking part of the population, but did not have much influence on the country's policies.

The editors of the Post and the Messenger confirmed that English speakers in Cameroon were marginalised. The Constitution did not distinguish between English and French speakers, but the marginalisation of the English speakers was so serious that they could be regarded as a sort of second class citizens.

Akere Muna saw the political parties as a typical expression of the ethnic divide in Cameroon. Despite claims to the contrary by the SDF, it was an ethnically based party based in western Cameroon. The UNDP was based in northern Cameroon, and the RDPC in the south. However, the RDPC had entered a number of opportunistic alliances with several other parties. The RDPC's "national character" was not because the party was nationally based but merely because it was the dominant government party which therefore attracted opportunists from other circles and population groups. All the RDPC leaders came from the beti people, to which President Biya belonged. Muna claimed that the beti "controlled and ruled everything" in Cameroon, and concluded that "power in Cameroon was ethnically based". As an illustration of how serious such a situation could be, Muna described the position in 1992-1993, when Cameroon was on the brink of a political and humanitarian catastrophe - like that in Rwanda - because there was then a political atmosphere with marked violent ethnic undertones. In Government circles the SDF was referred to as "the enemy within".

The majority of the sources consulted by the delegation were not particularly familiar with the situation of the separatist movements in Cameroon, but most agreed that the SCNC separatist movement and its youth organisation, the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL) were not registered, legal movements, and believed that the authorities feared the activities of those movements more than those of the political opposition parties. Most sources pointed out that neither the SCNC nor the SCYL were armed groups. However, one source was convinced that if armed conflict were to arise in Cameroon then this would most likely come from the radical parts of the SCNC or the SCYL.

#### **4.1.1 The Social Democratic Front (SDF)**

Léolein Nja Kwa remarked that the SDF currently held the post of mayor in seven out of Douala's eight districts. T. Asonganvi told us that in 1998 the SDF had sent a document

entitled "Abuse of Membership of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) by Asylum Seekers" to all the western embassies in Yaoundé. The document contains detailed information about the SDF's party structure and SDF membership cards (see Annex 11).

T. Asonganyi and Philippe Che observed that the SDF had played a decisive role in the fight for Cameroon's transfer from thirty years of one-party rule to parliamentary democracy in 1990. In four provinces, namely the North-West, West, South-West and Littoral provinces, the SDF had nearly 100% support from the people. Those four provinces were also where the Government's most radical opponents are to be found, including the separatists. This was why the Government focused to such an extent on the security situation in those regions. The SDF was suffering from this as a party, and the Government used many different methods to harass the SDF; e.g. by imposing extra taxes on it, or running scare campaigns and circulating false rumours about the party. The Government generally did what it could to give the SDF a bad reputation amongst the public.

Asonganyi added that, when it had been able to win a mayoral post for instance, the SDF had experienced the Government blocking the newly elected local SDF administration, e.g. by withdrawing financial grants, thereby limiting the SDF's opportunity to administer the area.

Asonganyi reported that the party was active internationally. It had offices in Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the USA, Belgium and the Netherlands and was currently setting up offices in Canada and Scandinavia (Copenhagen). These offices would be happy to assist the authorities of those countries with asylum-related questions. The SDF also had close contacts with Amnesty International (AI).

#### **4.1.2 The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) and the Southern Cameroons Youth League (SCYL)**

Akere Muna observed that the SCNC separatist organisation and its youth wing, the SCYL, were not legal organisations in Cameroon, and that membership of those organisations was therefore illegal. The Government regarded the problem with the SCNC as a minority problem. The SCNC was against the use of force, as its motto *The force of argument, not the argument of force* makes clear. The national commission on human rights (NCHRF) provided a press release issued by the SCNC on 20 September 2000, signed by Acting Chairman Nfor N. Nfor. The press release also contains information on the movement's post box numbers in both Buea and Bamenda, and gives an email address (see Annex 3).

The editors of the Post and the Messenger reported that the Government had succeeded in infiltrating SCNC, and that partly for that reason the organisation had leadership problems. There was thus a faction of the SCNC which was friendly to the Government, and two other factions. An overriding problem for English speakers was that the English-speaking organisations and parties were characterised by poor leadership.

The editors would not describe the SCNC as a political movement but rather as a pressure group.

## **5. Human rights organisations**

### **5.1 Generally**

As mentioned above, the introduction of a multi-party system in Cameroon in 1990 led to the formation of a large number of political parties; many NGOs also emerged at that time, including many claiming to be "human rights organisations". Several sources said that the vast majority of these NGOs were probably private ventures whose seriousness and credibility were questionable. Many of these NGOs had been founded with a view to getting access to funds for their founders. The lawyer Maurice Nkouendjin-Yotnda described many of the so-called human rights organisations and other NGOs in Cameroon as "private attempts to get hold of funds". Many of them did not even have an address. The very fact that there were so many of them was a sign of a lack of seriousness.

Gemuh Akuchu confirmed that no organisation or association - including human rights organisations - could operate legally in Cameroon unless it was registered and recognised by the authorities.

The delegation received a list of human rights organisations in Cameroon drawn up by a western diplomatic source on the basis of current information from many different sources. The list contains about 50 named human rights organisations. The source stressed that the list was not exhaustive and that the existence of the NGOs listed on it had not yet been established (see Annex 4).

Looking quickly through this list, the editors of the Messenger and the Post found it difficult to confirm that more than a few of the organisations named were credible. Some of the "human rights organisations" listed had a political side, e.g. some were more or less government controlled. The editors singled out the ACAT and the CA as credible, but added that they also regarded the Human Rights Defence Group (HRDG) as a credible organisation, although it was not on the list.

The NCHRF gave the delegation a list of the registered human rights organisations in Cameroon. This list contains a total of 120 registered organisations and is attached as Annex 5.

#### **5.1.1 The Human Rights Defence Group (HRDG)**

Gemuh Akuchu observed that the human rights organisation HRDG was a registered and legal organisation in Cameroon. The HRDG had received financial support from several western embassies, and had observer status at the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The HRDG also worked closely with Amnesty International (AI) and with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in London. The WFD is a British NGO which supports the establishment of democratic institutions in a number of countries and is financed by the British Government.

The editors of the Messenger and the Post described the HRDG as a credible and serious human rights organisation. The HRDG has its headquarters in Bamenda in western

Cameroon. It used to receive financial support from the British Embassy in Yaoundé, but the Embassy and the HRDG had disagreed about the use of those funds and the British did not want to appear as political supporters of the English speakers' cause in Cameroon.

The editors also reported that besides being the leader of the HRDG, Albert Mukong was also a leading member of the SCNC, but dismissed the idea that this meant that the HRDG was a political organisation. Mukong was one of the founders of the SDF, but had broken away from the party and set up the HRDG in 1994 or 1995. Mukong had a strong political position nowadays. He functioned as a sort of protector of the members of his organisation, which meant that the HRDG received many new members. The authorities did make attempts at harassment but there were no reports of members of the HRDG being in prison.

### **5.1.2 Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (ACAT)**

A western diplomatic source reported that Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (ACAT) contributed information for the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) quarterly and annual reports on the situation in Cameroon. The ACAT confirmed that the organisation works with Amnesty International (AI) and with the authorities in a number of European countries. Part of its work is inspecting Cameroon's prisons and detention centres, and gathering documentation on assaults and torture there.

### **5.1.3 Conscience Africaine (CA)**

Conscience Africaine (CA) is an internationally known Cameroonian human rights organisation. CA has an office in Yaoundé and has links with the human rights organisation, Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (NDH), which has its headquarters in Paris. The leader of the CA, Hilaire Kamga, is also the General Secretary of the NDH. The CA has worked with the EU on several occasions and receives financial support from a number of western countries. Bammel and Shira confirmed that the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) worked with the CA and added that Hilaire Kamga had had serious problems with the authorities and had been threatened by them in 1996.

## **6. Human rights situation**

### **6.1 Generally**

Hilaire Kamga pointed out that not only opposition party members and activists might be at risk from the authorities. Civilians without any connection with political activities also risked various sorts of persecution, including physical assaults and harassment. This was reinforced by the fact that individual citizens generally were not aware of their rights.

A number of sources pointed out that the authorities focused particularly on the members and activists of separatist movements. In the last year reports had also been received from Amnesty International (AI) amongst others that criminals, or those suspected of crimes, had also been particularly likely to be the victims of violent assaults by the authorities.

Most sources agreed that members of the established political opposition were no longer the

victims of the same level of persecution as previously. Most of the political opposition parties and their leaders had to some extent become part of the political establishment. A few sources explained that the authorities were much more afraid of the more "uncontrolled" part of the opposition, and therefore focused on its members and sympathisers. Some sources claimed that student activists, journalists and trade unionists were more difficult to control than the political opposition parties which, as already mentioned, have to some extent now become part of the political establishment. Those suspected of membership of the active parts of the SCNC and SCYL separatist movements were seen by most sources as being at risk of persecution by the authorities. Hilaire Kamga and several other sources said that generally the risk of persecution by the authorities for those in this group depended on what actual activities they were suspected of having participated in.

Patrick Lafon of the CENC claimed that the overriding problem in Cameroon nowadays was that the Government rejected the democratisation of the country, as it did not want to weaken its position of power. He was convinced that the Government had not won the election in 1992, but that the SDF had done so, and that "everyone in the country knew this". There had been massive fraud, and therefore the CENC - together with the political opposition - was demanding that an independent election commission should be established. The Government rejected this demand, and therefore there was no possibility of changing the government in Cameroon through the ballot box. He regarded it as a miracle that widespread political violence had not broken out in Cameroon. There were no armed opposition groups in the country but if an armed movement did emerge it would spring from the SCNC and SCYL separatist movements.

It is generally known that corruption is very widespread in Cameroon, and exists at all levels of society. Cameroon has been described as one of the world's most corrupt countries. Transparency International, an international NGO based in Germany, ranked Cameroon as the world's most corrupt country in 1998 and 1999. Most sources consulted by the delegation pointed out that corruption is not limited to purely economic affairs; to a large extent it is part of the justice system and of the administration as a whole. This fact, and the courts' dependence on the Government are decisive factors as regards the question of human rights and the rule of law in Cameroon. In 1999 the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) published a comprehensive study of corruption and its consequences for Cameroon. This states that of the 85 countries investigated by Transparency International in 1998 for its *Corruption Perception Index*, Cameroon topped the list of the world's most corrupt countries. The FES report *Corruption in Cameroon* makes clear that corruption does not just weigh on the justice system and the economy, but also constitutes a serious threat to the ability of society as a whole to function properly.

The editors of the Messenger and the Post pointed out that officially, members of the political opposition were not imprisoned in Cameroon. However, political opponents could be accused by the authorities of ordinary crimes with attempts made to find the weak points in an individual's past. This was a form of politically motivated harassment by the authorities.

Patrick Lafon felt that the main human rights problem in Cameroon was that there was no transparency or democracy there. The parliament was organised in such a way that the

opposition did not have any influence at all on legislation. Cameroon was *de facto* a one-party state, in which the political activities of the opposition were infiltrated by the authorities.

The lawyer, Akere Muna, stressed that the question of impunity was a central human rights problem in Cameroon. Widespread corruption meant that, without any consequences for the guilty, there was large-scale abuse of power at all levels of the administration.

Léolein Nja Kwa noted that the Government's strategy for dealing with criticism was to try to incorporate critics into its circles. This was confirmed by the editors of the Messenger and of the Post, who said that the Government had succeeded in taming the opposition to such an extent that individuals they described as previously being hard core elements had now been politically adapted and had toned down their criticism of the Government. Opposition politicians were now trying to be accepted by French speaking Cameroon.

The editors of the Post and the Messenger added that when the multi-party system was introduced in 1990, many people went over to supporting the opposition. Subsequently, parts of the opposition had become part of the establishment, i.e. the political elite, e.g. as mayors. It did therefore not make much difference whether a mayor was a member of an opposition party or of the ruling party. That was why young people in Cameroon nowadays were frustrated, and a movement such as the English speaking SCNC separatist movement had grown at the expense of the SDF. However, the editors added that even in the SCNC there were some leaders who had become corrupt.

Hilaire Kamga believed that there had been a significant improvement in the human rights situation and in conditions for the political opposition in Cameroon since 1997. The current situation did not resemble that in 1992-1993 or in 1997. This improvement was partly because of a change in the Government's attitude, i.e. in President Biya's policies. This had had a positive effect on the relationship between the Government and the opposition. For example, a major change was that the "official" arrests of political opponents had ceased. The authorities could no longer get away with arresting a member of the opposition on clearly political grounds. In November 2000 parliament had adopted a law on financial support for party political activities in Cameroon. This meant that the opposition parties could now receive financial support, which Kamga felt was a very positive step for democracy.

However, since the 1997 election, dialogue between Government and opposition had been more or less non-existent. Officially there was no dialogue between the parties, but since the SDF and other opposition parties were in fact represented in parliament, the "minister for special relations in parliament" functioned as a contact between them and the Government. This had led to an improved situation between the parties over the last three years. Kamga personally was now more optimistic than he had been. This was not least because President Biya was not able to turn the clock back to the period before the democratisation process began in Cameroon. History could not be reversed, and representatives of e.g. NGOs could now lobby through international organisations and thus have an influence on the administration in Cameroon. The President now had an interest in the human rights situation in Cameroon not getting any worse or appearing to be bad. This was partly because he was

under pressure from the churches, from human rights organisations, political parties and the international community.

Kamga also explained that there had been an improvement in the situation in Cameroon in the last two months compared with September and October 2000. This was partly because of international pressure and the Cameroonian media. However, probably more important was the convening of the recent summit between a number of African countries and France in Yaoundé in January 2001. It was therefore too early to say whether these were real improvements or whether this was just a temporary phenomenon.

Kamga saw President Biya as an intelligent strategist and a gifted politician who was convinced that an improvement in the political and human rights situation in Cameroon was in the interests of all parties. The political and human rights situation was now much better than in very many other African countries. However he and many other sources feared that the situation in the country could worsen as the next election approached. This applied to local, parliamentary and presidential elections.

### **6.1.1 The press**

Nearly all the TV and radio stations in Cameroon are state-controlled. Since 1997 the authorities have given permission for the establishment of some local radio stations, broadcasting educational programmes only. The radio stations do not have the right to transmit programmes of a political nature. There are also three private radio stations in Yaoundé which transmit religious (Catholic) programmes and music .

Hilaire Kamga reported that in 2000 the Government had given private TV stations permission to broadcast in Cameroon. He regarded this as an improvement in conditions for the press in Cameroon.

Officially there are about 500 newspapers in Cameroon but only 15 appear regularly .

Formal censorship of the printed press was abolished in 1997 but cases still occur of the authorities effectively limiting the freedom of the press through harassment. The Penal Code includes provisions laying down that defamation, abuse and the dissemination of false news may be punishable by imprisonment or a fine. These provisions are regularly invoked by the authorities to silence press criticism of the Government.

A western diplomatic source pointed out that there was a legal basis for prosecuting an individual who had made negative comments about the President.

The editors of the Messenger and the Post described their newspapers as independent but added that the authorities regarded both of them as opposition newspapers. Fokum said that since 1990 the Cameroonian Government had done nothing to ease the situation for the written press. For example, in the early 1990s the authorities regularly confiscated whole print runs of newspapers critical of the Government, and made them pay duties on the materials used to produce newspapers. At the same time, the Government-friendly part of the press received financial support in the form of a large number of advertisements inserted

by various Government bodies.

The sources believed that there was basically freedom of the press in Cameroon nowadays. However, there was still a certain degree of self-censorship. This was because the authorities regularly harassed journalists from newspapers which were critical of the Government with e.g. anonymous telephone calls or surveillance, acting either via the police or private agents, i.e. private persons acting unofficially on behalf of the authorities.

Gemuh Akuchu believed that journalists could usually work freely now. However, cases did occur of intimidation of journalists by the authorities. Most often this took the form of the authorities accusing a particular journalist of offences which had no connection with the individual's journalistic work, e.g. tax evasion. Akuchu repeated that the press now worked freely, and added that some journalists went too far in the sense that they published unconfirmed or incorrect stories.

Chinje Shira and Harald Bammel of the FES believed that any persecution of journalists nowadays took the form of accusations of defamation or libel. For example, a journalist by the name of Pius Ndjawe was imprisoned in 1997 for publishing an article claiming that the President was ill. The journalist was imprisoned for about a year.

According to "Africa South of the Sahara" Ndjawe was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for disseminating false news. The sentence was reduced to one year on appeal, and Ndjawe was then pardoned by the President and so did not serve his entire sentence.

Léolein Nja Kwa believed that the press - together with student and trade union activists - was the group the authorities feared the most, and therefore harassed the most. The editor of the Post mentioned as an example that a journalist risked harassment if he investigated a case in which an official was suspected of corruption. In such cases, the harassment would often be carried out by private individuals acting on behalf of an official. The editors of newspapers critical of the Government were sometimes also called to meetings with the Minister for Communications to be told what they could not write.

The editor of the Messenger reported that there were currently no journalists in prison in Cameroon following sentencing. However, there were cases pending against journalists for defamation etc. Madeleine Afité of the ACAT believed that there was no real press freedom in Cameroon and that journalists still had to be careful what they wrote.

Hilaire Kamga reported that journalists were still occasionally arrested. The authorities had many ways of harassing journalists. Michel Pekoua, a journalist who worked for the newspaper "Ouest Echo" was imprisoned between June and August 2000 because he refused to reveal the name of a source.

Kamga also pointed out that the founding of the journalists' trade union, Union des Journalistes au Cameroun (UJC) three years ago had led to positive developments for the country's press. The trade union had become a forum where journalists from the government press and from the free press who were traditionally professional and political opponents

could talk directly with one another. This had led to the two groups having a less intransigent attitude to one another, although differences remained. The UJC's first chairman had been connected to the ruling party. However, the current chairman was a leading journalist from the independent newspaper the Messenger, while the deputy chairman was a journalist for the state TV channel, CRTV, which Kamga regarded as a particularly positive development.

### **6.1.2 Student activists**

Léolein Nja Kwa felt that student activists were more vulnerable to persecution by the authorities than other groups in the country. The Government wanted to give the outside world the impression that Cameroon was a stable country, but regarded the student scene as a breeding ground for radical anti-government activity. The Government feared that radical political demands for social and economic changes in the country would come from the students. The Government therefore mistrusted students generally, and the authorities attempted to monitor, infiltrate and control student circles.

Nja Kwa added that students had been far better politically organised before 1990 than they were now. Student organisations had for the most part been dissolved as a result of the Government's repression and infiltration of student circles.

Hilaire Kamga explained that the Cameroon's student movement had gone through three phases in the last ten years, covering the periods 1991-1993, 1995 and 1999-2000. From 1991 to 1993 hundreds of students had fled abroad, in particular to countries bordering Cameroon, but also to Europe and to the USA. Most fled as a result of oppression and persecution. Some were killed and others imprisoned. In 1995 there was another period of oppression, but not nearly so serious as the

previous time. In 1999-2000 there was student unrest in Douala. This unrest led to a number of student leaders and activists being excluded from studying at any university in Cameroon. The ACAT and CA human rights organisations had criticised these exclusions, but no official explanation for them was ever given. The Government denied that these students had been forbidden access to the universities, but when they presented themselves for registration they were stopped by the police and denied access. The ACAT and the CA have proof that they were prevented by the police from registering. Cardinal Tumi played a leading role in supporting the student movement in Douala and he succeeded in bringing the problem to a conclusion in March 2000. However, four student leaders are still banned from having access to the universities. The student unrest in 1999-2000 developed when student leaders sent a memorandum to the government demanding better financial conditions, including a reduction in fees.

Kamga reported that no student activists were currently detained or imprisoned in Cameroon. Those who had previously been sought by the authorities had long since left the country.

Bammel and Shira commented that the most recent cases of student activists having to flee abroad were in 1993. Since then student activists had not had serious problems with the

authorities. However, student circles had been infiltrated by the authorities, were divided, and did not represent any threat to the government. Generally, students in Cameroon were not the victims of persecution by the authorities. Bammel had not noticed students having serious problems with the authorities in the last three years.

The editors of the Post and the Messenger added that most student leaders had long since left Cameroon. The student body was weak, and no prominent student leaders remained. When asked whether it would be possible for the delegation to meet leading student activists in Cameroon, they replied that this would not be possible because there were none.

### **6.1.3 The trade union movement**

Harald Bammel and Chinje B. Shira remarked that that trade union movement in Cameroon was divided and no longer constituted a threat to the Government, which was therefore no longer concerned about the movement as a political factor. Bammel said that he had been in Cameroon for three and a half years and that he had never at any time heard of anyone having serious problems because of membership of a trade union.

Kamga confirmed that the Cameroonian trade union movement had become weak and divided in recent years. Until 1999 it had been relatively strong, and had played a more central role for its members than was now the case. The leader of the national trade union organisation, Louis Sombès, had played a politically active role before 1999 and refused to appear as a supporter of the Government. Sombès had a strong position amongst the working class in Cameroon and said that his task was not to support the Government but to protect the interests of the workers. He was therefore seen as a political opposition figure by the Government, which tried in vain to create an alternative Government-controlled national organisation. This lay behind the power struggle between the trade union movement and the government in 1996 and 1997. In the end, the Government took effective control of the movement and let Louis Sombès take up a post abroad as the director of the African Regional Organisation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The Cameroonian national organisation then lost its central political position, and since Sombès had left Cameroon only the teachers' union had played an active role. The Secretary General of the teachers' union was a well-known and prominent personality in Cameroon.

Kamga believed that members of the trade unions generally did not have problems with the authorities because of their membership, and that there were no individuals currently detained or imprisoned because of their activities on behalf of or membership of a trade union. Both the leaders and other members of the teachers' union could risk harassment from the authorities. This harassment could take the form of members' chances of making a career in the public sector being limited or destroyed.

Kamga reported that the journalists' trade union, the Union des Journalistes de Cameroun (UJC), had received support from the CA and from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. This trade union represents journalists from the independent press and from the government controlled part of the press. UJC is the largest trade union for journalists in Cameroon.

#### **6.1.4 Human rights activists**

Hilaire Kamga listed the human rights organisations which had had particular problems with the authorities in Cameroon: Mouvement pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés (MDDHL), SOS Droit et Démocratie (SOSDD), Human Rights Clinic and Education Centre (HURCLED), SOS Jeunesse Libre (SOSJL), ACAT and CA. The Ocalip organisation had previously also had difficulties with the authorities. Note that Ocalip is not on the list mentioned above of registered human rights organisations, which the delegation received from the NCHRF (see Annex 5). Kamga added that the situation for human rights organisations (and for the political opposition in general) in Cameroon had improved considerably since 1997.

Madeleine Afité said that members of the HRDG did not have problems with the authorities simply because they were members or activists of that organisation. This applied to all members of registered human rights organisations in Cameroon. It was relatively common for members of political opposition parties also to be members of a human rights organisation.

Afité noted that neither the leaders nor other members of the ACAT had felt the need to leave Cameroon and seek protection abroad solely on the grounds of their activities for the ACAT. The ACAT and Madeleine Afité had however experienced harassment by the authorities, e.g. in the form of a blockade from February to December 2000 when the authorities monitored both Afité herself and ACAT's office. She described this form of harassment as massive intimidation.

Gemuh Akuchu observed that the HRDG was one of Cameroon's most active human rights organisations. The HRDG treated the question of the SCNC as a minority problem in south and north western Cameroon and had submitted the matter in these terms to the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva.

Akuchu explained that the HRDG had previously had some problems operating in Cameroon and confirmed that the HRDG's leader, Albert Mukong, had been imprisoned several times. In some cases it could be difficult to draw a clear dividing line between human rights, politics and religion in Cameroon. This was illustrated for example by the case of the HRDG.

Kamga explained that Albert Mukong had officially shown sympathy for the SCNC separatist movement. Mukong was a known activist and had been in prison many times in the past. Mukong's problems with the authorities now did not necessarily mean that other members of the HRDG were being persecuted.

The editors of the Post and the Messenger confirmed that Albert Mukong had been imprisoned several times. The authorities might focus on HRDG activists despite the fact that the HRDG was a registered and therefore legal organisation. On the other hand, Mukong's position as an internationally known activist could have a sort of protective effect for HRDG members.

Akuchu said that a member of the HRDG would not be arrested or imprisoned solely because of his HRDG membership. The authorities would use other grounds to detain a member of the HRDG if they wanted to do so.

Akuchu added that the HRDG and MDDHL human rights organisations were both especially active organisations, and that members and activists from those organisations might therefore receive more attention from the authorities than members of some other organisations. The HRDG operated throughout Cameroon and held seminars in all the provinces. Its headquarters was in Bamenda. MDDHL only operated in North Cameroon and had its headquarters in Maroua. The lawyer Abdoulaye Math was chairman of the MDDHL.

Replying to a question, Akuchu said that there had been several cases of the national human rights commission (NCHRF) being harassed by the authorities, particularly when it was newly established. For example the authorities had tried to block the commission's work several times, but had not done so since 1992.

Patrick Lafon would not describe the HRDG as a militant political organisation, but thought that the Government might like to portray it as one. Individuals linked to human rights organisations had in a few cases been forced to leave Cameroon in fear for their lives, once they had come to the authorities' attention. He described an occasion when the authorities had ordered a soldier to place some weapons in the office of a known human rights campaigner, so that they could accuse him of the unlawful possession of firearms. However, the soldier had disclosed the authorities' plans to the individual concerned.

T. Asonganyi stressed that the HRDG was neither a militant nor an armed human rights organisation. The organisation's leader Albert Mukong was a respected person, who had formerly been a separatist, but the HRDG was now a sound and respected human rights organisation.

### **6.1.5 Members of the political opposition**

Harald Bammel and Chinje B. Shira believed that almost no-one was imprisoned on political grounds alone. Nor could they imagine detentions taking place on political grounds in connection, for example, with a forthcoming election, which traditionally increased tension between the Government and the opposition. Human rights observers both nationally and internationally would make it very difficult for the authorities and the Government to get away with detaining and imprisoning political opponents.

However, the lawyer Maurice Nkouendjin-Yotnda was convinced that there were political prisoners in Cameroon. He referred to the imprisonment of a number of members of the UNDP who had protested against electoral fraud. He described how prominent persons who opposed the government had been subjected to various forms of harassment, e.g. their telephones or electricity had been cut off, extra taxes had been imposed on them etc. However, such persons were not necessarily at risk of being detained or imprisoned by the authorities.

Solomon Gwei and Gemuh Akuchu of the NCHRF believed that ordinary members of the SDF or members of other opposition parties were not persecuted by the authorities. This was confirmed by Bammel and Shira of the FES.

Gwei and Akuchu pointed out that it was easier for members of the ruling party and its allies to hold meetings and carry on political activities than for members of the opposition to do so. A political demonstration had to be notified to the authorities. However, sometimes the authorities ignored these notifications, thus legitimising attacks on demonstrations of which they had in fact been notified. In such cases there was a risk of participants being arrested.

Asked whether people were detained by the authorities for political reasons alone, Hilaire Kamga replied that President Paul Biya did not have the same opportunities to deal with political opponents as he had had in the past. International attention and pressure meant that people could no longer be detained purely on political grounds. The authorities therefore tried to use other methods to suppress the opposition. Kamga referred to the case of Titus Edzoa, who had stood against President Biya in the 1997 presidential election and was then imprisoned for corruption.

Kamga also reported that two individuals had been imprisoned in Yaoundé since last year. They were being detained without charge and without being sentenced, simply because they had written evidence that the Government lay behind an arson attack on a church south of Douala. Several people including a bishop had died as a result of the fire. Witnesses of the arson were driven into the bush and some were fired at by the authorities. Besides the two prisoners mentioned above, the leader of the Mouvement Nationale pour la Révolution (MNR), Boule Merlin, had also been imprisoned as a consequence of these events. Kamga did not have any further details about the MNR, but described it as a secret organisation.

In summary, Kamga explained that only a few people were in prison who could be described as political prisoners. The CA itself inspected prisons and seldom found actual political prisoners. Those who could be described as political prisoners came from all levels of political life, but were often people who had some quarrel with a person in authority or in the Government. Kamga was very unsure of the number of true political prisoners in Cameroon, but when asked suggested that the number might be about ten people. The CA regarded members of the SCNC, the SCYL and other separatist movements currently in prison as political prisoners.

Léolein Nja Kwa did not have much confidence in the Government's goodwill towards parliamentary government and the political opposition in Cameroon. He pointed out that the political opposition parties were not really recognised by the Government. Unlike the ruling RDPC party, these parties did not have access to funds. The Government showed a lack of respect for human rights. As a leading member of SDF, Nja Kwa had himself been the victim of torture while in detention three years ago.

Nja Kwa could not answer the question of whether there were now political prisoners in Cameroon's prisons and detention centres, but he could mention one case, namely that of Titus Edzoa mentioned above.

T. Asonganyi believed that the Government and authorities in Cameroon showed covert intolerance of the opposition. The regime did not listen to the opposition's political views, whether those of leading opposition politicians or ordinary members. Businessmen who were members of the opposition could have difficulties in running their businesses, and a member of the opposition who held public office - whether he was a leading or an ordinary member - could risk harassment.

Asonganyi illustrated this with a couple of examples. One concerned Justin Pokon, a tax official and member of the SDF. He was moved from one post to another in the country without any proper grounds. The other example was a lawyer by the name of Mekok, who was a Senior Court Registrar in East Province. Mekok had been elected as the fourth vice-chairman of the SDF. The Government then accused him of corruption and failure to pay back a loan. He was subjected to financial harassment, with his pay being delayed. The administration in East Province told Mekok to leave the SDF, and four months ago the SDF had received Mekok's resignation. Asonganyi claimed this as an example of how the authorities tried to limit the political influence of the SDF in Cameroon to the northern and western provinces - in other words the traditionally English speaking parts of Cameroon.

As another example of how the Government was trying to frighten and embarrass the opposition, Asonganyi and Che described events during the French President Jacques Chirac's visit to Cameroon in connection with the Franco-African summit in January 2001. During the parade in Yaoundé on 13 January 2001 before the summit, opposition politicians including the SDF had taken up positions like everyone else on the parade ground in the town centre. However, members of the so-called "Presby group", which had close ties with the Government, had infiltrated the SDF group. When Chirac's convoy passed by, members of the Presby group threw stones at the convoy, so that it looked as though it was SDF politicians who were behind this action. The chauffeur and private secretary of the SDF Chairman, John Fru Ndi, were then openly attacked by the Presby group. The secretary was seriously injured and was left lying on the street; the SDF took him to hospital. Asonganyi gave the delegation a photograph of the victim and explained that this event had been a very great embarrassment to the SDF and the rest of the political opposition.

The Government was deliberately but unfairly trying to equate the SDF with the separatist movements such as the SCNC and the SCYL, by making it look as though not only the SCNC and the SCYL but also the SDF were behind the militant actions in the Bamenda area in March 1997. Asonganyi stressed that the SDF was not. The SCNC and the SCYL may have been so, but Asonganyi still suspected that the Government itself was behind some of them, so as to have an excuse to arrest both SCNC and SCYL separatists and members of the SDF. Chinje B. Shira of the FES also believed it to be possible that the authorities lay behind the events in Bamenda, to find a pretext for arresting political activists.

Asonganyi added that it was well-known that members of the SCNC and the SCYL often had SDF membership cards. Radicals linked to the separatist movement were thus sometimes also members of the SDF. However, the SDF did not support the separatists or the demand for independence for the English speaking part of Cameroon. The SDF wanted a politically united but federal Cameroon.

Asonganyi explained the SDF's political role in and attitude to the anglophone question in Cameroon as follows. The first All Anglophone Conference in Cameroon was held in Buea in 1994 and was called AAC I. The *Buea Declaration* was adopted there. The declaration stated that Cameroon should be a united federal state. In 1995 another anglophone conference was held in Bamenda, known as AAC II, where the *Bamenda Proclamation* was adopted. Many members of SDF participated. The conference resulted in a demand that the Government should resolve the anglophone question within a reasonable period of time, or the two declarations would come into force. Shortly afterwards a radical group declared that full secession should now take place. This was the cause of a number of violent events in Bamenda. At the same time the SDF stated that the question of secession could only be solved by political means, and the SDF had stated this officially several times.

Hilaire Kamga confirmed that the authorities regarded members of the SDF opposition party as automatically linked to the English speaking separatist movements, as support for both the SDF and the separatist movements came from the English speaking part of the population. However, he would not claim that members of SDF were generally persecuted by the authorities. The current leader of the HRDG human rights organisation, Albert Mukong, had been one of the founders of the SDF in 1990. Replying to a question, Kamga said that only Mukong could comment on his current relationship with the separatist movements.

Chinje Shira of the FES claimed that an individual was not at risk of attack or persecution just because he was an English speaker. The leaders of opposition parties in Cameroon had frequently insulted the ruling party without experiencing any problems for that reason.

#### **6.1.6 Members of separatist movements**

Léolein Nja Kwa explained that neither the SCNC nor the SCYL were really political parties as such. They were not recognised and registered, and were therefore not legal movements. The existence of such separatist movements was an indication of a blockage in political life in Cameroon, which did not leave room for political solutions or progress by political means - a situation which Nja Kwa deeply deplored. Political life in Cameroon was marked by frustration and a lack of opportunities.

This situation was central to Cameroon's political history. In November 1999 the UN's Special Rapporteur on Torture reported that since the Government had taken the step of dissolving the former federation between English and French speaking Cameroon in 1972, and had instead established strongly centralised state power, there had been significant frustration and disaffection amongst a substantial portion of the English speaking part of the population in the country. A number of the sources consulted by the delegation in Cameroon made this same point in different ways.

Chinje B Shira believed that the political aim of the radical separatists was to gain political concessions from the Government rather than the actual secession of the English speaking areas. Hilaire Kamga shared this view, believing that the SCNC's radical demands for secession were in fact being put forward for strategic reasons in order to achieve a more moderate goal - namely self-rule for the English speaking areas. Gwei and Akuchu of the

NCHRF stressed that there was no *de jure* oppression of the secessionist movement in Cameroon. They described the oppression which did occur as *de facto* oppression.

T. Asonganyi stressed that there were no armed rebel groups in Cameroon. He was not aware that the SCNC or the SCYL had conducted any sort of armed fight or lain behind any armed actions or murders since March 1997.

Hilaire Kamga believed that activists, suspected activists, or those who were members of or linked to the SCNC and SCYL separatist movements and any secessionist movements, attracted the attention of the authorities. The question of who led the various factions within the SCNC was not relevant, as neither Prince Esoka Ndoki Mukete nor Henry Fossung were the real leaders of the SCNC. Scarcely anybody could name the real leaders of SCNC as they worked covertly. The question was not of any practical significance in terms of the authorities' view of the issue. The only decisive matter was what practical activities any given individual had been involved in, and the degree of arbitrariness which would always affect the authorities' views and treatment of suspected political activists.

Hilaire Kamga said that of all the opposition groups in Cameroon, the authorities feared the SCNC and the SCYL most as "militant separatist movements", and stressed that an individual's links with any particular branch of the SCNC would not have any effect at all on the extent to which he would be the focus of the authorities' attention.

Bammel and Shira believed that "militant" separatists, which chiefly meant members of the SCNC and the SCYL, could be at risk of attack and persecution by the authorities. However, they did not believe that there was currently a really armed wing of either the SCNC or the SCYL. Both the SCNC and the SCYL were illegal organisations, and the Cameroon Anglophone Movement (CAM) had now been absorbed by the SCNC. The movement was founded in Buea in connection with the All Anglophone Conference in 1995. The SCNC was immediately banned by the authorities. The Government did not allow the SCNC to hold meetings but was naturally aware that it was active. Those who participated in SCNC meetings might risk detention by the authorities. Many English speakers in Cameroon were members of the SCNC, but only a few belonged to the radical part of the movement, and only the latter were in danger of persecution, not ordinary members of the SCNC.

The editors of the Post and the Messenger were able to confirm that there were currently a number of prisoners in Yaoundé whom they would describe as political prisoners. They had been convicted by a military court. The total of 18 prisoners had been arrested in 1997 and sentenced to terms of between 5 and 25 years of imprisonment; some had received life sentences. They were all convicted of separatism and of the unlawful possession of weapons. All the prisoners were known members of the SCNC or the SCYL. The leader of the SCYL, Ebenezer Akwangan had been sentenced to life imprisonment.

Nja Kwa reported that the President of the SCNC, Frédéric Ebong, was still in prison because he had declared himself President of southern Cameroon and had plans for that area to secede from the rest of Cameroon. This had happened at the end of 1999. Nja Kwa had no further information on the SCNC or the SCYL, but added that these separatist

movements were a threat to Cameroonian stability and their presence was thus a national security question. The SDF did not support these separatist movements, which operated particularly on the border with Nigeria.

Madeleine Afité observed that members of the SCYL had previously had problems with the authorities, when a group of SCYL members had hoisted the SCYL's own flag in 1998 in Buea. The police stepped in and beat several activists. She added that all imprisoned or detained members of the SCYL and the SCNC had been released in connection with the Prime Minister's visit to Buea in June 2000. She had not received any information that members of the SCNC or the SCYL had subsequently been arrested and did not believe that any members of the SCNC or the SCYL were currently in prison. However she added that there were signs that members of both organisations were being harassed.

Gemuh Akuchu reported that a professor and judge by the name of Frédéric Ebong had been arrested in Buea in December 1999 with six others. They had been transferred to prison in Yaoundé, and were still being detained there because they had declared the independence of western Cameroon. Akere Muna observed that there had not yet been a trial in connection with the SCNC's occupation of a radio station in Buea. Bammel and Shira believed that those who had participated in that action had probably all been arrested. However, they were not sure about this, and would not be surprised if the authorities arrested more suspects.

Gwei and Akuchu said that there were many such arrests and imprisonments, and that if there was a suspicion that a case was political, the NCHRF would investigate the circumstances of the case. It was not unusual for someone who had been arrested to be detained for months or even years without being charged. One hundred and seventy four people had been arrested in Bamenda in March 1997, and the chairman of the NCHRF was himself leading the investigation of the case. Some of those detained had been convicted of terrorism, but most were found innocent and all except 18 had been released.

Akuchu reported that five prisoners, called "the forgotten five", who were suspected of being members of the SCNC, had been released from Kondengui Central Prison in Yaoundé on 6 October 2000. During the NCHRF's inspection of Kondengui prison in August 1998 the Commission had discovered that these five people had been in prison for more than three years without at any time being charged or appearing before a judge. The NCHRF said that the five seemed to have been forgotten in prison. Four of the prisoners had been arrested on 20 September 1995 and the fifth on 4 February 1997.

Gwei and Akuchu confirmed that leading members of the SCNC constantly had problems with the authorities but believed that ordinary members and activists would only have problems with the authorities in connection with specific SCNC activities.

Patrick Lafon assumed that any member of the SCNC would be at risk of persecution by the authorities in Cameroon. An SCNC leader by the name of Elad Ekotang and several other members of the SCNC had been detained for more than a year, partly because of the SCNC's occupation of a radio station in Buea and their declaration of an independent Anglophone Cameroon. No judgment had been delivered in the cases; in fact the detainees

had not even been charged. The Government focused largely on the SCNC. This was because it feared the SCNC's demands for the secession of the English-speaking part of Cameroon. None of the proper opposition parties were demanding secession and so the Government handled the SCNC more harshly than them.

Kamga pointed out that an activist linked to the SCNC risked problems with the authorities and possibly punishment for his affiliation. However, he was sure that a person would not be imprisoned just because of his links with a separatist organisation. There were no official Government statements to the effect that the SCNC was an illegal organisation and there was no law forbidding organisations such as the SCNC. The question of whether or not the SCNC was illegal was, however, irrelevant. The SCNC was not a registered organisation. The Government and authorities were not actually seeking out members of the SCNC. Since 1997, when many people were arrested who were suspected of membership of separatist organisations in Cameroon, there had been no mass arrests of separatists. An official who was a member of, for example, the SCNC would not risk losing his job on those grounds but might risk being harassed, for example by a reduction in his salary.

The UN news service IRIN announced on 20 March 2001 that six members of the SCNC had been released after 14 months in prison. They had all been accused of high treason (see Annex 6).

### **6.1.7 Linguistic and ethnic situation**

Bammel and Shira confirmed that the mere fact that someone was an English-speaking Cameroonian did not mean that he would risk attracting the authorities' attention. The bamiléké people were prominent commercially and were the economically dominant group in Cameroon. Despite that fact, the bamiléké were socially and politically marginalised and had originally supported the SDF in the belief that the party, and hence they themselves, would gain political influence. The bamiléké had therefore been frustrated by the SDF's lack of influence and some had stopped supporting the party. However, the SDF continued to win an important proportion of its support from the bamiléké.

Patrick Lafon explained that those ethnic population groups in Cameroon whose members were known to be in opposition to the Government were discriminated against. This discrimination was on a tribal basis and affected whole groups of the population in the country's provinces. Many members of the government belong to the béti, which is President Biya's own tribe.

Lafon stressed that he did not regard the SDF as an ethnically or linguistically based party, as it was 100% national. However, the Government was trying to restrict the SDF to being a party which was only representative in individual English-speaking provinces. In non-English-speaking provinces where SDF candidates had nonetheless won mayoral elections, the Government created difficulties for the new mayors trying to take up their posts. Lafon hoped that the SDF would remain a patient party and maintain a long-term perspective in the fight for democracy.

### **6.1.8 Religious situation**

Patrick Lafon commented that there was no tension between Cameroon's Christian, Muslim and animist peoples. He stressed that there was no particular conflict between Christians and Muslims. He would not in any way compare the situation with that in Nigeria, where the question of the introduction of Sharia law in some states had led to violent conflict between Christians and Muslims.

In Cameroon there were secret religious sects or communities. The best known of these was the *Rosicrucian Society*, which has wide support in Government circles. Most members of the Government and many prominent businessmen were members of this secret religious community, which, they believed, gave them protection and success. President Biya had donated seven million CFA to the *Rosicrucian Society*. Lafon added that to achieve success in Cameroon's administration and society one had to be a member of the Society.

### **6.1.9 Conditions of detention and imprisonment**

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Sir Nigel Rodley, visited the largest prison in Douala (New Bell) and the largest prison in Yaoundé (Kondengui) in May 1999. According to Rodley's report, at the time of the inspection the New Bell prison in Douala housed 2,393 prisoners although it was only built to house 800. When it was inspected, Kondengui Central Prison in Yaoundé housed 2700 prisoners, although it too was built to house 800. The report also pointed out that 2550 of the 2700 prisoners in Kondengui Central Prison were still awaiting trial.

The report noted that the cells inspected were almost without exception overcrowded; for example one cell housed 140 prisoners although there was only sleeping accommodation for 90 prisoners. Because the cells were overcrowded, many of the prisoners had to sleep on the floor or outside.

The report judged sanitary conditions to be particularly inadequate. For example, Kondengui Central Prison only had 16 toilets and showers. Patrick Lafon confirmed that the sanitary conditions in Cameroon's prisons were generally extremely bad.

The possibility of obtaining medical treatment in the prisons was also particularly inadequate. In New Bell prison the conditions for sick prisoners were described as very poor, and it was noted that 30 prisoners had died between 1 January 1999 and 1 May 1999. A majority of prisoners interviewed pointed out that the one meal they received a day was not sufficient and that most depended on their families bringing food to them while they were imprisoned.

The most recent *Cameroon Assessment* by the British Home Office also points out that the prisons in Cameroon are seriously overcrowded and notes that the possibility of obtaining adequate medical care is almost non-existent. The report also states that prisoners regularly die as a result of a lack of adequate medical care or of conditions in the prisons more generally.

Sir Nigel Rodley's report explains that torture is forbidden by law in Cameroon. However, the report states that "torture is resorted to by law enforcement officials on a widespread and systematic basis". Torture is generally used to obtain information relevant for the maintenance of law and order. The report also points out that the widespread use of torture could be discovered by the UN's Special Rapporteur in a few days, from which it must be concluded that the management of the various institutions enforcing law and order and those politically responsible must necessarily be aware of this .

Madeleine Afité reported that the ACAT had not recorded any definite cases of politically motivated torture or other inhuman treatment of prisoners in Cameroonian prisons in the last 12 months. The most recent such cases had been in 1997, in North-West Cameroon. She stressed that if politically motivated torture or suchlike had happened since 1997, the ACAT would know about it. The ACAT had a branch in Bamenda, the regional capital of North-West Cameroon, and was able to visit the country's prisons and detention centres.

However, she added that there could sometimes be some confusion about the relationship between ordinary criminality and political activity. Often, a member of a political movement would claim that charges against him were politically motivated, even if the charges and arrest were related to purely criminal activity. Any leader of a political opposition party would know of any attack on its members and know whether a member had been imprisoned or otherwise detained.

Hilaire Kamga explained that it was not possible to say in advance who might be at risk of being assaulted or tortured during time in detention or in prison in Cameroon. This would depend on the actual circumstances. However, conditions in the country's detention centres and prisons were very bad and had not improved in recent years. This had been documented in several official reports.

Kamga agreed that it might well be the case that the ACAT had not recorded any persecution of political prisoners in the form of torture etc while in detention in Cameroon in the last 12 months.

The CA had not done so either, but this did not mean that such persecution did not take place. The CA was aware that torture etc occurred widely in Cameroonian police stations, detention centres and prisons. Anyone who visited such places would rapidly realise that such attacks were still taking place. This was confirmed by the inmates themselves. Anyone detained by the Cameroonian authorities risked being tortured or otherwise assaulted. This happened all the time, and there was generally total impunity for those carrying out such attacks. However, the problem was not that the Government ignored what was happening, but that victims did not come forward and give evidence about what was going on.

The editors of the Post and the Messenger claimed that torture and other assaults on those in detention centres and in prison were a very serious problem, and that it was usually political prisoners who were tortured. The newspapers were able to report about such events without hindrance, in articles with photographs documenting the assaults. The forms of torture used were branding with hot irons, torture using electrical devices and whipping. Last year a

political prisoner had died from torture in the prison in Yaoundé.

Solomon Gwei and Gemuh Akuchu claimed that an arrest in Cameroon was almost always followed by some form of torture including physical torture. Whenever an important political event took place in the country, e.g. in connection with an election campaign, whether this was for a local, presidential or parliamentary election, there would be arrests. Sometimes there were mass arrests, when there would almost always be cases of torture of those arrested.

Gwei and Akuchu explained that the tradition of torture and violence had developed during the fight for independence, when the nationalist movement Union des Populations de Cameroun (UPC) had played a central role in the fight for independence and the unification of British western Cameroon and French eastern Cameroon. The UPC was violently suppressed by the French colonial authorities, whose harsh methods were particularly notorious in connection with the bamiléké uprising in 1960, when the French General Briand was behind the murders of so many rebels that attempts had been made ever since to conceal the number of people killed.

The French colonial authorities set up schools for the Cameroonian armed forces and police, and Gwei and Akuchu described violence and torture as a sort of "way of life" or "culture" which had been passed on to independent Cameroon. The training of policemen in colonial times and under the first regime in independent Cameroon usually contained a significant element of violence and torture. The British colonial authorities did not behave in the same harsh way as the French. Those held in detention in Cameroon nowadays are almost always treated as though they had already been sentenced.

Gwei and Akuchu explained that conditions were not the same in all of Cameroon's provinces. In ten of the country's 15 provinces, where the NCHRF has been involved in recent years in the training of policemen, the occurrence of violence and torture has gone down in relation to the remaining five provinces. One of the most central human rights problems in modern Cameroon was the occurrence of torture and the fact that impunity for the perpetrators was such a widespread phenomenon.

Kamga and most of the other sources agreed entirely with Gwei and Akuchu, highlighting the serious human rights violations stemming from the authorities' widespread use of torture, and total impunity for those who committed such acts. Most sources agreed that torture and impunity for the perpetrators were the most serious human rights problems in Cameroon at present, and Hilaire Kamga said that there were no signs of improvement in this area.

In 1998, the national human rights commission (NCHRF) took the initiative, with support from the French Mission for Cooperation and Cultural Action in Yaoundé, of documenting and improving conditions in the country's detention centres and prisons. In November and December 1998, the NCHRF organised a workshop in Yaoundé to discuss how conditions in detention centres and prisons could be improved. The introduction to the NCHRF's report on the workshop states that the NCHRF's mandate is to promote understanding for and the protection of human rights in Cameroon. Since 1992, the NCHRF has inspected a number of

the country's detention centres and prisons and informed the Government on the disturbing conditions there. The Government replied that it was fully aware of conditions and that it had set up an inter-ministerial group to investigate and solve the problems involved. However, in its report from the above workshop in 1998, the NCHRF found that, despite this, conditions were deteriorating. The NCHRF writes: "In spite of this, the conditions under which people are arrested and detained continue to deteriorate. They are characterised, among other things, by: overcrowded, cramped and unhygienic cells, regular use of torture and protracted detention without charges" .

Kamga reported that President Biya had become aware of the seriousness of the problem and he mentioned it in his New Year speech to the nation. The CA praised the President for recognising the problem; the President officially replied that he saw three serious human rights problems in modern Cameroon, namely, people's ignorance of their rights, abuse of power by the police and impunity for violations and corruption amongst the judiciary.

The NCHRF provided a list of prisons in Cameroon, which is attached as Annex 7.

### *Private prisons*

Madeleine Afité reported that a local tribal leader known as a *lamida* in the northern province of Cameroon was running a private prison. The leader was linked to the ruling party and ran this prison, in which torture and in some cases execution without trial took place, without the authorities intervening. A member of the opposition UNDP party had died after being tortured by the *lamida* in the prison.

The UN Special Rapporteur also reports that NGOs had informed him that some tribal leaders in the northern province of Cameroon ran private prisons where there were arbitrary detentions and assaults on inmates .

## **7. Law and order and the judicial system**

### **7.1 Generally**

A vast majority of sources commented that the police, courts and the entire judicial system were so corrupt that a fair trial could not be taken for granted.

#### **7.1.1 Security forces and the police**

The national police and the gendarmerie are primarily responsible for the maintenance of law and order in Cameroon. Other institutions with a role in this area are the National Intelligence Service, the military intelligence service, the President's security service, the army and the Ministry of Territorial Administration. The security forces as a whole are controlled by the President, the Minister for Defence and the head of the national police.

A number of the delegation's sources mentioned the existence of a particularly notorious police corps, the Commandement Opérationnel (CO).

Genevieve Faure explained that the CO was set up at the beginning of 2000 to fight growing crime, including highway robbery. The CO was led by Colonel Paille. Hilaire Kamga said that the head of the CO had very wide powers and was thus personally responsible for CO operations. Faure observed that the CO was believed to be behind round-ups of civilians, arbitrary attacks and murders. This was particularly the case from April to June 2000 in connection with a large-scale operation, officially to fight crime. Nowadays the CO's operations were of a less serious nature than previously as a result of pressure from NGOs and the international community.

Madeleine Afité confirmed the existence of the CO and reported that for a time in 2000, as a human rights organisation, the ACAT had been harassed by the CO. The CO had blockaded the organisation's office and shadowed several of its workers. In 2000 the CO had persecuted three prominent student activists who had led demonstrations at the university in Douala. Because of the rumours about the CO's methods, in 2000 an American diplomat had presented Cameroon's President with a list of persons believed to be victims of the CO's operations.

The editor of the Messenger believed that the CO had regularly carried out executions without trial.

Hilaire Kamga of the CA observed that the ACAT in Douala had had major problems with the CO. Several members of the MDDHL human rights organisation, working in Cameroon's Far Northern province, had been arrested by the police after they had investigated the CO's measures to combat crime there.

Kamga added that highway robberies in northern Cameroon had previously resulted in the Government deploying the "anti-gang" unit. This was before 1998. The Government had solved the problem of highway robberies in the same way as they subsequently solved the problems in Douala with the help of the CO. There had been many innocent victims of the anti-gang operations in northern Cameroon. The leader of the MDDHL had documented these attacks and had been at great risk of being killed by the anti-gang unit and other security forces. He had therefore fled from Cameroon. Akere Muna noted that the CO operated entirely outside the law, and he stressed his objections to this. Kamga confirmed that the CO's operations were not subject to orders from the relevant official.

Kamga reported that there were cases of persons connected with the CO using their positions to attack individuals with whom they had a personal quarrel. The recent lull in the CO's activities was not necessarily because of international pressure on the Cameroonian Government. It was still too early to say whether the CO's recent low profile was permanent or simply a temporary situation caused by Cameroon hosting the Franco-African summit in January 2001, which had been attended by a large number of heads of state including French President, Jacques Chirac.

According to Kamga, the anti-gang unit was not identical with the CO. The anti-gang unit, which was part of the gendarmerie, operated outside the law as did the CO, but, unlike the CO, was a permanent unit. The CO had been established on a temporary basis to reinforce efforts against organised and serious crime. The anti-gang unit which was controlled

directly by the President, did not need to record those it detained. Its head was regarded as a sort of deputy minister who reported directly to the President. Kamga explained that the anti-gang unit had been set up several years ago, and that it was the head of that force who was in practice responsible for the arrest of political prisoners. Former Minister for Public Health Titus Edzoa was currently being held by the anti-gang unit and thus not in a normal prison.

On the subject of Edzoa, several sources believed that President Biya had for a long time acquiesced in Edzoa's embezzlement and had only used it against him when Edzoa challenged Biya as a candidate in the presidential election.

Hilaire Kamga reported that the Government was now obtaining assistance from the French Mission for Cooperation and Cultural action and other organisations in training policemen in human rights issues. There had also been some new recruitment of young policemen. These had all been trained in human rights issues and the result was that the population had experienced a notable and positive change, particularly in Yaoundé. Police behaviour there had become much better than previously. Kamga described this development as a very positive and significant step in the right direction.

Thus the police no longer openly demanded unlawful fees or fines from drivers, for example, or threatened them with weapons to make them pay fictitious fees or fines. This was particularly appreciated by taxi and bus drivers who had daily been the victims of this sort of persecution on the streets and at checkpoints. The problem had in particular been that drivers were not aware of their rights and had not dared try to achieve justice through the law. They had had no faith in the legal system, or the opportunity of getting a fair trial. The CA and the NDH had made a major effort to improve this situation, and therefore strongly encouraged anyone who had suffered an injustice to bring his case before a court in Cameroon. The CA assisted private individuals bringing court cases.

### **7.1.2 The courts and the justice system**

The justice system in Cameroon consists of one court of first instance in each of the country's 58 *divisions*, courts of appeal in each of the ten provinces and a Supreme Court. Besides the civilian courts there are also military courts which also have jurisdiction in civil cases of "civil unrest, organised armed violence, gang crimes, gang banditry and highway robbery".

Hilaire Kamga explained that the military courts are permanent institutions. Such courts normally deal with military cases, but in practice any case which concerned state security was dealt with by them, i.e. including cases concerning the separatist question.

There are two juridical systems in Cameroon. In the two English-speaking provinces, the South-West and North-West provinces, the administration of justice is based on the English system. In the eight French speaking provinces it is based on the French system. The Penal Code applies in the whole country, but the two systems each use their own rules regarding procedure in criminal cases. The two sets of rules are however very similar.

Gemuh Akuchu highlighted that there were two justice systems in Cameroon. There was a widespread tendency for the police and legal system in provinces where the administration of justice was based on the French legal system to work unofficially on the assumption that those suspected of crimes were guilty until proven innocent. A prisoner only had the possibility of a judicial test of the legality of his detention in the two English speaking provinces. The authorities often moved prisoners in the English speaking provinces to a French speaking province for example to Douala or Yaoundé. This quite usual practice was used to take prisoners away from their home areas where they had support networks.

Several sources pointed out that some cases which under normal circumstances would fall to the civilian courts had been dealt with by the military courts. For example, Madeleine Afité said that the cases against a group of suspected separatist activists, who had been arrested in connection with unrest in the North-West province in 1997 in which the prefect's house was burnt down, had in 1999 been brought before a military court. The sentences ranged from life sentences or long prison terms, to acquittal.

The cases were transferred from a civilian to a military court. Moreover, they were transferred from an English-speaking court in the North-West province to the capital Yaoundé, where the cases were conducted in French despite the fact that the accused were English speakers. The trials were subsequently described as unfair by international human rights organisations, including Amnesty International .

### *Detention and imprisonment*

Maurice Nkouendjin-Yotnda explained that Cameroonian legislation authorised the police to detain a person suspected of an offence or caught red-handed for 24 hours for the case to be investigated. This 24-hour period may be extended three times if necessary for the investigation. Thus according to the law a suspect can be detained for a maximum of four days, after which he must be brought before a judge. If the judge finds that there is a need for further investigation the police can continue the detention. There is no legislation stating how long such detention may continue.

When the investigation is complete it is for the judge to decide whether charges are to be brought against the individual, or whether he should be released. If charges are brought the judge must decide whether the individual should still be detained or whether he may be released on bail until the case comes to court. For release on bail, a guarantee must be given that the person will not flee the country or remove evidence in the case. A person may also be released on bail if he is regarded as so well-known that it would be impossible for him to go into hiding. According to the law, in such cases the judges must release a person on bail. Nkouendjin-Yotnda said that release on bail only happened in very few cases, and he saw this as a serious problem.

The rules on detention were often broken in practice. As an example, he described one of his own cases in which a watchman was arrested, suspected of taking part in a robbery. The man was imprisoned for a total of 5 years before he was sentenced. The maximum sentence for the alleged offence was only one year.

The law does not provide for the possibility of a lawyer having access to a client in police custody. The lawyer only has the right to be present when the detainee is brought before a judge. Nkouendjin-Yotnda said that this was a serious problem as there was a risk that a detainee could be physically assaulted in prison. Although lawyers bring such assaults to the attention of the human rights organisations in practice this had little effect.

As an example of conditions in the justice system, Léolein Nja Kwa explained that a senior division officer, a local civil servant, can issue an arrest order authorising the police to hold an individual for up to 15 days. This is authorised by legislation, but Nja Kwa felt that it violated human rights. The authorities' grounds for using this possibility were most often that the arrested person was a "troublemaker". A person could thus be detained for several weeks without a court order and without being accused of a crime. This detention could be extended an unspecified number of times without the prisoner being brought before a judge. The source found this practice particularly disturbing.

The UN Special Rapporteur's report confirms that detention in Cameroon is subject to the rules described by Nkouendjin-Yotnda. Pre-trial detention may take place on the orders of authorities from the Public Prosecutor down to senior police officers at local police stations. In practice the rules on pre-trial detention are not observed .

The report also confirms that administrative detention can take place for the period referred to by Nja Kwa, with a possibility of extension. According to the report, the UN's Special Rapporteur found a number of cases of administrative detainees during his mission to Cameroon in 1999. Although the authorities denied that they were administrative detainees, the same authorities admitted that the arrest orders had been issued by prefects and governors in various provinces .

Patrick Lafon regarded it as a serious matter that people were in prison in Cameroon without being told what they were accused or charged with. In connection with political demonstrations, participants were sometimes imprisoned without charge and for an indefinite length of time. Lafon explained that these were illegal detentions but were mostly of short duration.

### **7.1.3 Possibility of a fair trial**

Chinje B. Shira believed that the administration of justice in Cameroon was extremely corrupt and referred to Transparency International's ranking of Cameroon as the world's most corrupt country in both 1998 and 1999.

Solomon Gwei explained that judges in Cameroon were not independent but were often under the influence of the state or of whichever party in any particular case had connections to powerful people. It was well-known that corruption was particularly widespread in Cameroon.

Léolein Nja Kwa claimed that there were two classes of citizen in Cameroon. The one consisted of those who supported or were connected with the ruling RDPC party. The remainder of the population were treated as second class citizens. The administration was

not neutral, and this also applied to the justice system which was controlled by the ruling party. Nja Kwa added that it was important to distinguish what was normal in Cameroon from what was legal. T. Asonganyi also observed that members of the opposition, whether they were leaders or ordinary members, would not get a fair trial in Cameroon. This was a situation to which SDF members generally were exposed.

Nja Kwa explained that there were three factors to be taken into account when assessing the possibility of a fair trial in Cameroon. These were corruption, clientism (i.e. the so-called patron-client relationship between the judge and the parties in court cases) and ethnic affiliation. Corruption in the country was widespread, and it was stressed that *any* judge could be bribed, whatever the political affiliation of the accused. If a person was a member of the right political party (i.e. of a party friendly to the government), he would *always* be able to get his party to influence the judge. If an accused belonged to the same ethnic group as the judge, he would also benefit from that. These factors were, however, less important. The crucial point was the corrupt judicial system and clientism.

It was difficult to say whether certain ethnic groups were more vulnerable under the justice system than others. Members of minority groups would generally find it far more difficult to get a fair trial than members of more dominant ethnic groups. Ethnic minorities were usually not represented in the judiciary. Nja Kwa's belief was that most trials in Cameroon were not fair and he stressed that neither the leaders nor ordinary members of the political opposition in Cameroon would be able to get a fair trial; nor would student activists ever be able to do so.

Nja Kwa believed that the material conditions of an accused, pressure from human rights campaigners in Cameroon and international pressure could contribute to an accused getting a fair trial.

Madeleine Afité believed that someone who had a private dispute e.g. with a high-ranking official could not be sure of a fair trial. Private citizens often used false accusations as a way of settling private disputes. This led to the risk of an unfair trial as those involved would normally use the connections they had to officials etc. Impunity was a recurrent human rights problem in Cameroon. Hilaire Kamga found it highly regrettable and directly offensive that some sources claimed that the judiciary in Cameroon was completely corrupt and that it was therefore impossible to find a judge in the country who could not be bribed. Kamga said that this was simply not true, and added that in fact there were judges in Cameroon with good reputations. Such judges worked completely independently even in cases where they were under pressure e.g. from the Cameroonian Ministry of Justice. The CA was working hard to convince people that it really could pay to go to the courts to obtain justice. It was necessary to use the courts to obtain justice and therefore the CA offered support to those who took this step.

He underlined that it was possible to obtain a fair trial. He described a case in which a journalist had written a critical article about the head of the economically very important Cameroonian oil industry. Despite this, the journalist was released by the judge, and Kamga concluded that even in a case with political undertones it was possible to obtain a fair trial. However he admitted that the chances of a fair trial in a political case would probably not

be particularly great, but still existed, and therefore the CA would always support those who wanted to have their case tried by a court. There was a judicial system in Cameroon, and it was important to make use of it.

Afité confirmed that the death penalty still formally existed in Cameroon but that most death sentences were commuted to 25 years' imprisonment.

## **8. Conditions for entering and leaving the country**

### **8.1 Generally**

There are no legal restrictions on the freedom of movement in Cameroon, and there are no restrictions on leaving the country. A western diplomatic source reported that passport issue was hardly ever a problem in connection with departure from Cameroon, but that visas were more problematic. A person who wanted to leave had to be able to prove that he had funds to do so and could maintain himself during his stay abroad.

#### **8.1.1 Departure**

A western diplomatic source said that there were no difficulties in leaving Cameroon. No thorough checks were made on departure from Douala airport.

The police did not possess an electronic database on wanted people. There was possibly a manual register of those connected with large-scale economic crimes. Individual police might also know the names of wanted individuals. However, even a wanted criminal would be able to leave via the airport. This also applied to those who were active in the political opposition. The source knew of no cases of political activists being detained when trying to depart. There was no central electronic database of Cameroonian citizens.

Hilaire Kamga reported that the secret police (DGRE) had an electronic database of all the persons they wanted. However, in the airports there was only a manual register. He believed that if someone was wanted by the DGRE the airport police would be informed accordingly.

As an illustration of the weak airport controls, the diplomatic source above described an occasion where someone claiming to be a Cameroonian citizen had passed through passport control and through police and customs checks at the airport although he could not speak French, the main language of Cameroon. He also knew of cases where departing Cameroonians had been able to pass through several controls at the airport with false visas.

The same source said that generally it was very easy to bribe the police, e.g. at the airport, and wanted Cameroonians or those without valid visas would probably be able to bribe their way out.

It would not be possible for an agent to accompany someone leaving via the airport all the way through the controls to the plane itself. This applied to departures with Swiss Air, Air France and Sabena. An agent might be able to accompany the departing person onto the plane itself in the case of departure with Cameroon Airlines. However, Cameroon Airlines'

procedures had been tightened up since June 2000 when a new director of the company had been appointed. Nevertheless, it might still be possible to do it, since "everything is possible in Cameroon".

Foreign (European) airlines had tightened pre-departure controls. Although 80% of all travellers could slip through the airport controls with a false passport and/or visa by use of bribery, effectively no-one would get through the final control by foreign police in the boarding lounge.

Over the last two years there had been a great increase in the number of Cameroonians leaving for Europe. Demand for visas to European countries had become significantly greater. The reason for this was that many Cameroonians wanted to improve their economic situation by living abroad. Young Cameroonians who wanted to leave to try to improve their economic situation were readily understood at all levels of Cameroonian society. This applied to their families, village, the police and the authorities in general.

Even wanted persons would be able to leave via the airport in Douala; it would also be possible to leave illegally via the land border with Nigeria. Border controls were not thorough, and even local people did not always know where the border ran. Illegal departure via the port in Douala would also be possible. The source had not experienced Cameroonians leaving for political reasons. This also applied to the large numbers of young Cameroonians who were constantly leaving.

Genevieve Faure produced a report drawn up by the British immigration attaché in Lagos, Nigeria during a working visit to Cameroon in May 2000. After inspecting departure procedures at Douala airport the attaché concluded that document checks in the airport were particularly inadequate and that if false passports or visas were identified this was more by luck than professional skill. The report also stated that it was easy for non-passengers to accompany passengers right to the gate for departures with Cameroon airlines. The report concluded that "security is not a strong point at Douala airport and airside access can be achieved fairly easily".

Anastasia Ongmboune, airport police officer, Douala, said that a significant number of Cameroonian citizens left the country for Europe and the USA. A Cameroonian citizen could not leave without a visa for the country he wished to go to.

Airport controls had recently been improved as a result of an increase in the number of Cameroonians leaving on false documents.

The authorities were currently working on setting up an electronic database at the airport. The system was not yet operational as large-scale staff training was required. The aim was that the police at check points in the airport should have access to electronic databases of wanted people.

T. Asonganyi believed that the authorities at the airports had lists of wanted persons. He could not dismiss the possibility that people might be on such lists on political grounds. The editor of the Messenger also believed the police had list of wanted persons or of what he

described as dangerous elements.

### **8.1.2 Arrival**

A western diplomatic source believed that a rejected asylum applicant forcibly returned to Cameroon would not be at risk. He was not aware of the Cameroonian authorities detaining Cameroonian citizens who had been deported after their asylum applications had been rejected, simply because they had sought asylum abroad. He did not know of cases where a returned rejected asylum applicant had had problems with the authorities as a result of being deported. He pointed out that the authorities were not informed that people were rejected asylum applicants.

Gemuh Akuchu confirmed that rejected asylum applicants who returned to Cameroon voluntarily were not at risk of being detained by the police on their return.

A rejected asylum applicant who was deported in handcuffs and was accompanied by a foreign policeman who handed him over to the Cameroonian authorities at the airport risked detention by the police. This would be to investigate his background. If the Cameroonian authorities were aware that he had sought asylum abroad he would be suspected of having discredited Cameroon. If the authorities merely found that he had sought asylum for economic reasons he would be released. The editor of the Messenger also believed that asylum applications abroad were seen as damaging Cameroon's image.

The same source reported that in December 2000 a returning Cameroonian had been detained by the airport police in Douala because he was on a list of wanted persons. No official reason was given for his arrest, but it was probably on political grounds. The returning Cameroonian had been active in an English-speaking Cameroonian group in the USA. He was released after 12 hours. Such detentions were short, usually a day or half a day.

Several sources said that there were cases of Cameroonians coming over the land border from Nigeria to avoid the risk connected with arriving at airports.

T. Asonganyi reported that if the authorities knew that someone was a rejected asylum applicant they would arrest him as, by applying for asylum, he would be suspected of harming Cameroon's reputation abroad. He would also risk being ill-treated or even tortured.

Akuchu said that the forcible or accompanied deportation of a rejected asylum applicant would not cause problems if the authorities were not informed that the individual was a rejected asylum applicant. The best way to deport a rejected asylum applicant was for accompanying policemen to wear civilian clothes as though they were travelling with any other person.

None of the diplomatic sources consulted by the delegation were aware of any cases in which the return of rejected asylum applicants had led to serious problems for those involved. Several sources said that no such cases had been mentioned by Amnesty

International or by human rights organisations in the relevant western countries. They took this as a sign that there were no cases of rejected asylum applicants having problems with the Cameroonian authorities because of their asylum applications.

One western diplomatic source reported that their local legal adviser had stated that there was no legislation in Cameroon providing for prosecution for seeking asylum abroad. However, in practice things could be very different. His country had known a number of cases of rejected Cameroonian asylum applicants marrying nationals while their asylum applications were pending. The rejected asylum applicants had then voluntarily gone home to Cameroon to wait for family reunification from there under existing rules. The source saw this as a sign that rejected Cameroonian asylum applicants were not persecuted when they returned home. If the contrary was the case, they would have been persecuted while they were in Cameroon waiting for their applications for family reunification to be processed. None of the individuals concerned had reported to the representation in Cameroon that they had been persecuted because of their asylum application abroad. The source added that rejected asylum applicants who returned voluntarily were not known to be such in Cameroon. The Cameroonian authorities would not be able to tell whether deported Cameroonians were rejected asylum applicants or had, for example, been deported because their visas had expired.

Another western diplomatic source reported that last year one European country returned nearly 200 people to Cameroon. They were escorted by police, and none of them had reported problems of a political nature in Cameroon. Some were rejected asylum applicants and others had committed minor crimes.

The same source commented that Cameroonians who had left on a false passport and been returned to Cameroon would not be punished as a result. Someone who tried to enter on a false passport would be able to do so without problems.

### **8.1.3 Passport issue procedures**

One western diplomatic source observed that there were no particular problems for Cameroonian citizens in obtaining passports. The formal conditions were the production of a valid national identity card and a birth certificate. It normally took about a week to obtain a passport.

Many Cameroonians who wanted to get passports came from the provinces. They often presented false identity cards and birth certificates but were still issued with passports. There was no police check connected with the issue of passports. The source did not know the official price for the issue of a passport.

Cameroonian national passports were relatively easy to falsify. They were not laminated, and the passport photograph was simply stuck to the appropriate page of the passport. It was also easy to buy a passport on the black market. This cost about 400 Danish kroner, or about half a month's wages for a public employee. There was a comprehensive, overt but illegal trade in blank documents of all sorts in Cameroon.

Anastasié Ongmboune confirmed that it was not difficult to falsify a Cameroonian national passport. The airport police saw many cases of false passports, as a result of the large number of Cameroonian nationals who wanted to leave the country. There were also cases of false foreign passports. International courier firms comprising Cameroonian nationals abroad were used to send Cameroonian passports back to the country so that they could be reused by other Cameroonian nationals who wanted to leave.

## **9. Official documents**

### **9.1 Generally**

Several sources pointed out that it is particularly difficult to assess whether documents from Cameroon are genuine as all sorts of forgery may occur. Bribery, a lack of pre-printed blank documents and the existence of local variants mean that it is really only possible to assess whether documents are genuine by using a lawyer.

It is therefore not possible to give an exhaustive account of issue procedures etc, for official documents.

Both French and English are official languages in Cameroon. There are official names for administrative units, official positions etc. in both French and English. Printed official documents are often bilingual. The English version is used below.

#### **9.1.1 Issue of documents**

Gemuh Akuchu explained that Cameroon is divided for administrative purposes into *provinces, divisions and subdivisions*. The central administrative authority is the *Ministry for Territorial Administration*. The civilian administration consists of *governors* responsible for provinces and *senior division officers* responsible for *divisions*. At the lowest level are *division officers* responsible for *subdivisions*. In each *subdivision* the local *division officer* is the senior official and the local police and gendarmerie operate under his authority.

Arrest warrants and summonses are issued and signed by the local *governor* or *senior division officer*. Arrest warrants may also, more usually, be issued and signed by the local *division officer*.

In practice, such documents are often issued and signed by senior police or gendarmerie officers at local level. Formally, this happens under the authority of the civil administration. However, summonses may be issued by ordinary police officers. This can for example occur in connection with a traffic offence. When they are on duty, policemen usually carry blank summonses which already have an official stamp on them and just need to be signed by the officer. Locally, summons forms may also be used as arrest warrants.

Arrest warrants and summonses may also be issued by the public prosecutor, known as the State Counsel, who is found in every *division*. If someone is presented with an arrest warrant, the case must be brought before the public prosecutor, who decides whether there are legal grounds for pre-trial detention or whether the individual should be released. This

procedure is the same in all the provinces.

As is the case with arrest warrants issued by the civil administration, arrest warrants from the public prosecutor are in practice often signed by the local chief of police or of the gendarmerie at division level. This is despite the fact that such documents are officially meant to be issued and signed by the public prosecutor.

In country districts the chief of police or of the gendarmerie often delivers a summons in person. It even happens in country districts that a summons is delivered by the person who made the complaint.

The lawyer Akere Muna said that in principle documents issued by the authorities were drawn up on pre-printed forms. However, there were no rules on how various official documents should look, and documents issued by the authorities did not follow one standard model. Genuine documents issued by the authorities could thus occur in different forms.

Genevieve Faure explained that it was particularly difficult to assess whether Cameroonian documents were genuine. There could be several genuine versions of the same type of document, since local officials might be obliged to draw up forms themselves on typewriters if they had run out of supplies of the relevant form. Thus, genuine documents might look crude or false. Even the staff of western consulates in Cameroon found it difficult to decide whether or not documents were genuine. The American Embassy used a local lawyer to assess whether documents were genuine and paid him particularly well to ensure as far as possible that the assessments were made reliably.

Gemuh Akuchu explained that documents issued by the authorities were normally drawn up on pre-printed forms. Usually a document drawn up by the authorities would not occur in typewritten form. However, Akuchu could not exclude the possibility that genuine documents issued by the authorities might be, drawn up and issued at local level, and therefore not resemble the equivalent document drawn up on a pre-printed form. If the local authorities had run out of a particular form it could happen that they either used photocopies or themselves drew up the relevant document on a typewriter.

Asked whether the police, prosecuting authority and court could all be located in the same building and use the same typewriter, and whether documents from these three authorities might be signed by one and the same person, Akuchu said that this was not impossible. The lack of standard practice and widespread corruption of various authorities could lead to different types of document being issued by the same person. This did not necessarily mean that these were false documents.

### **9.1.2 False documents, bribery and corruption**

The vast majority of sources highlighted the fact that the falsification of documents is a particularly widespread phenomenon in Cameroon. Madeleine Afité drew the delegation's attention to the frequent occurrence of false documents in Cameroon and explained that e.g. certificates of release are often forged.

Genevieve Faure said that this could involve either actual forgeries, i.e. documents/forms fraudulently produced, or the unauthorised issue of documents using genuine forms. Forgeries often occurred of, for example, birth certificates, identity cards, marriage certificates, arrest warrants and certificates of release. Genuine blanks of such documents could be bought on the street in Cameroon.

The delegation was able to observe that the sale of various blanks took place openly in the market in front of the post office in Douala. Without any difficulty the delegation bought a range of blanks, including several styles of nationality certificates and birth certificates. Examples of these are in the Annex (see Annexes 8 to 10).

As an illustration of the widespread occurrence of falsified documents in Cameroon, Faure gave the delegation a number of documents. With one exception, these were documents which had already been issued or filled in.

The documents included four completed birth certificates drawn up on three different sorts of form, a certificate of release, a summons, a letter confirming that someone was a member of the SDF and was being persecuted by the authorities on political grounds, and finally a medical certificate.

Genevieve Faure said that the British Consulate had had all the documents assessed to find out whether they were genuine. It had discovered that the four birth certificates were all false. In the case of one, it had been confirmed that the form used was old and had not been in use at the time when it was supposed to have been issued. The names included on another birth certificate were not registered in the *civil status registry*, and the official who had signed it was not the one who was competent to sign such certificates at that time. In the case of the last two birth certificates, it had been established that the forms were genuine but the contents were false. The certificate of release was not of the type being used at the time it was issued. The official stamp on the summons was correct. The signature on the document could not be made out and so could not be verified. Some technical descriptions in the SDF letter did not agree with the terms used by the SDF. Thus, in the letter the word "comité" was used for the SDF's smallest administrative unit, although the correct term is "cellule". The letter used the title "président de la circonscription" whereas the correct term is "secrétaire général". The doctor's certificate was also discovered to be false as the doctor who had signed it was not and had never been an employee of the relevant hospital.

Akere Muna stressed that if an asylum applicant had had official documents sent on by a lawyer, a sworn statement by the lawyer on the genuine nature of the documents should be insisted upon.

He also stated that a person who is the subject of an arrest warrant does not himself receive the warrant. Nor is it handed to his relatives. An arrest order is simply shown to him by the police. Anyone presenting an arrest warrant or search warrant for himself must have obtained the document illegally.

Gemuh Akuchu confirmed that an arrest warrant would not be given to the suspect but

would only be shown to him.

Madeleine Afité also confirmed that a person who was the subject of an arrest warrant would not receive either the original or a copy. Someone released from prison would receive the original of the certificate of release. The ACAT was aware of cases of Cameroonian asylum applicants in European countries presenting arrest warrants for themselves.

Akere Muna and Madeleine Afité agreed that only a person's lawyer had the right of access to documents. Family members or other relatives could not obtain the right of access to documents. Even the lawyer only obtained access when the case came before court. A third party would not be able to obtain access.

## **10. Privately issued documents etc.**

### **10.1 Generally**

In 1998 the SDF informed a number of western embassies in Cameroon in writing of the existence of false letters of support, membership cards etc. These documents appeared to have been produced by the SDF but sometimes also by others. They had been used by Cameroonian nationals applying for asylum abroad.

#### **10.1.1 Documents issued by the SDF**

Léolein Nja Kwa reported that Cameroonian asylum applicants had produced letters and documents purporting to have been issued by the SDF in support of their asylum applications. In fact, written requests that a person should be granted protection abroad could only be issued by the Chairman of the SDF, John Fru Ndi. He might gather information from local SDF leaders in preparing such letters, but it was only John Fru Ndi who could sign them. The rules on competence to sign this type of letter were laid down in the SDF's rules and had been so since the party was founded in 1990.

Hilaire Kamga ruled out the possibility that John Fru Ndi might take money to issue such letters in support of asylum applicants.

Nja Kwa informed us that SDF membership cards were printed centrally once a year. John Fru Ndi's signature was pre-printed on the cards. Both false and original membership cards could be bought on the streets. Nja Kwa had himself been offered bribes to issue SDF membership cards to non-members. He therefore felt that an SDF membership card was worthless as evidence, even if it appeared to be genuine. He was aware that many non-members were in possession of SDF membership cards and added that many asylum applicants from Cameroon would cite membership of an opposition party in an attempt to produce a credible reason for asylum. There had been a lively trade in SDF membership cards amongst students who had used the cards to support asylum applications in western countries. The American and Swiss authorities had visited Cameroon to investigate to what extent all these cardholders were being persecuted on political grounds. Nja Kwa pointed out that the widespread corruption in Cameroon was not limited to Government circles

Corruption also occurred in opposition circles.

T. Asonganyi, the Secretary General of the SDF, said that up to 1998 a large number of letters had been issued in which an allegedly leading SDF member recommended that a particular individual should be granted protection abroad. When the leadership of the SDF became aware of the problem a rule was introduced that only the party Chairman John Fru Ndi and its Secretary General, currently T. Asonganyi himself, were authorised to issue and sign such letters.

Asonganyi confirmed that SDF membership cards could probably be bought or obtained in an unauthorised fashion by non-members. There were also cases of false SDF membership cards.

In May 1995 the SDF had decided to issue membership cards once a year. A membership card was issued for the period June to December 1995. Cards were then issued once a year, but as too many cards had been printed for June to December 1995 these were used in 1996. Such cards had a green stamp stating "DECEMBER 1996" and another stating "300 CFA". Party chairman Fru Ndi's signature was printed on the membership cards, and they showed to which section the member belonged.

At section level (known as *wards*, or in French as *cellules*) there were registers of members. These sections were the party's smallest units and had between 50 and 1000 members.

The SDF had issued a document in which it distanced itself from abuse of SDF membership and alleged SDF membership in order to obtain asylum. This document had been sent to all the western embassies in Yaoundé. The document is attached as Annex 11.

Nja Kwa suggested that if asylum applications were received from Cameroonians who claimed to be members of the SDF, they should be asked about the party's structure, its local and central leadership and its rules. He was prepared to assist the Danish authorities verify SDF membership and added that he would forward copies of the party's rules and an outline of local SDF leaders.

### **10.1.2 False newspaper articles**

The editors of the Post and the Messenger reported that there were cases of certain newspapers printing false newspaper articles for money. Such articles were usually printed when the official edition of the newspaper had already been printed and distributed; the newspaper would then change one page of the newspaper and put in a false article instead of the original. These false articles would usually describe someone as being sought by the authorities because of his political activities. Requests to print such newspaper articles came from people who were planning to seek asylum abroad and who wanted to be able to produce documents showing that they would have problems with the authorities if they returned to Cameroon.

The editors confirmed that they themselves had been asked to print false articles by people who intended to use them in support of asylum applications. Both had always refused such

requests. It was not only established newspapers which took money to print false articles. Some "newspapers" had been set up solely with the aim of printing such articles, and after three to six months the "newspapers" would shut down. These were referred to as "mushroom newspapers".

Genevieve Faure commented that the forging of newspaper articles was a frequent occurrence. She had experienced particular articles not being in the authorised edition of a particular newspaper on the appropriate day, when this was checked.

Chinje B. Shira also said that cases occurred of inaccurate or false newspaper articles being produced for use in asylum applications.

## **11. Individuals, organisations and authorities consulted**

Afité, Madeleine, Representative, Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (ACAT), Douala.

Akuchu, Gemuh, Executive Secretary, National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms/Comité National des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés (NCHRF/CNDHL), Yaoundé.

Asonganyi, T., Secretary General, Social Democratic Front (SDF), Yaoundé.

Bammel, Harald, Resident Representative, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Yaoundé.

Ché, Philippe, Administrator, National Executive Committee, Social Democratic Front (SDF), Yaoundé.

Faure, Genevieve, Representative, British Consulate, Douala.

Fokum, Kebila, Editor, The Messenger, Yaoundé.

Gwei, Solomon Nfor, Chairman, National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms/Comité National des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés (NCHRF/CNDHL), Yaoundé.

Hofmann, Katja, Consular Attaché, German Embassy, Yaoundé.

Kamga, Hilaire, President, Conscience Africaine (CA) and Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (NDH) and Secretary General, Réseau Francophone des Droits de l'Homme (RFDH), Yaoundé and Paris.

Konkombo, Marie Claire, Promotion Officer, National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms/Comité National des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés (NCHRF/CNDHL), Yaoundé.

Lafon Patrick Abbot Secretary General Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Cameroun

(CENC), Yaoundé.

McNulty, Mel, Senior Research Officer, Africa Research Group, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London (Yaoundé).

Muna, Akere T., Barrister-at-Law/Bâtonnier de l'Ordre des Avocats du Cameroun, Muna, Muna & Associés, Yaoundé.

Neill, Ken, Deputy High Commissioner, British High Commission, Yaoundé.

Nja Kwa, Léolein, Mayor, Commune Urbaine d'Arrondissement de Douala 1er/ President, Social Democratic Front (SDF) Douala I, Douala.

Nkouendjin-Yotnda, Maurice, Lawyer, Docteur d'Etat en Droit, Yaoundé.

Ongmboune, Anastasie, Airport Police Officer, Yaoundé.

Pefok, Joe Dingo, Editor, The Post, Yaoundé.

Richardson, Karen F., Third Secretary, Canadian High Commission, Yaoundé.

Shira, Chinje B., Programme Manager, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Yaoundé.

Tarif, Pamela, Second Secretary, British High Commission, Yaoundé.

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Pierre Titi Nwel, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung *Corruption in Cameroon*, Yaoundé, June 1999.

Regional Surveys of the World, *Africa South of the Sahara 2001*, 30<sup>th</sup> Edition, Europa Publications, London September 2000.

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*Rapporteur, Sir Nigel Rodley, submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1998/38, November 1999.*

US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, *1999 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Cameroon*, Washington February 2000.

Swedish Institute of International Affairs, *Kamerun, São Tomé och Príncipe*, Stockholm March 2000.

### **13. Abbreviations**

AAC - All Anglophone Conference

AI - Amnesty International

ACAT - Action des Chrétiens pour l'Abolition de la Torture (*Christian Action for the Abolition of Torture*)

CA - Conscience Africaine (*African conscience*)

CAM - Cameroon Anglophone Movement

CENC - Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Cameroun (*national episcopal conference of Cameroon*)

CNDHL - Comité National des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés (*National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms*)

CPDM - Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (ruling party)

FES - Friedrich Ebert Stiftung

HRDG - Human Rights Defence Group

HURCLED - Human Rights Clinic and Education Center

MDDHL - Mouvement pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés (*Movement for the Defence of Human Rights and Liberties*)

MNR - Mouvement National pour la Revolution (*national movement for the revolution*)

NC - Nouvelle Convention (*new convention*)

NCHRF - National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms

NDH - Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (*New Human Rights Foundation*)

RDPC - Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais (*Cameroon People's Democratic Movement*)

RFDH - Réseau Francophone des Droits de l'Homme (*francophone human rights network*)

SCNC - Southern Cameroons National Council

SCYL - Southern Cameroons Youth League

SDF - Social Democratic Front

UDC - Union Démocratique du Cameroun (*Cameroonian Democratic Union*)

UJC - Union des Journalistes du Cameroun (*Cameroonian union of journalists*)

UNDP - Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (*National Union for Democracy and Progress*)

UPC - Union des Populations Camerounaises (*Union of Cameroonian Populations*)

#### **14. List of Annexes**

Annex 1: Map of Cameroon

Annex 2: Genuine SDF membership card

Annex 3: SCNC press statement

Annex 4: List of human rights organisations in Cameroon produced by a western diplomatic source in Cameroon

Annex 5: Officially registered human rights organisations in Cameroon

Annex 6: IRIN West Africa Update 934, 20 March 2001

Annex 7: List of prisons in Cameroon

Annex 8: Blank certificate (birth certificate 1)

Annex 9: Blank certificate (birth certificate 2)

Annex 10: Blank certificate (certificate of nationality)

Annex 11: Abuse of membership of SDF by asylum seekers (issued by the SDF and circulated to western embassies in Yaoundé in 1998).

*The annexes are available on request*

**Annex 1. Map of Cameroon**

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