Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
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Cameroon - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 10 March 2010

Information on trafficking in Cameroon.

The September 2009 *United States Department of Labor* report for Cameroon states:

> ”Cameroon is a source, transit, and destination country for trafficked children for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor. Most of the trafficking in Cameroon occurs internally. Children are trafficked from northern regions to central, southwestern, and other regions to work on cocoa farms and work on the streets. Children are also trafficked internally for forced labor in restaurants and bars and on tea plantations. Girls are trafficked from the provinces of Adamawa, North, Far North, and Northwest to the cities of Yaoundé and Douala for domestic labor and commercial sexual exploitation.
>
> Children are also trafficked to Cameroon from Benin, Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo, and Niger, for forced labor in agriculture, fishing, street vending, and spare-parts shops. Cameroon also serves as a transit country for children trafficked between Gabon and Nigeria, and from Nigeria to Saudi Arabia.” (United States Department of Labor (10 September 2009) *2008 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor – Cameroon*)

The July 2009 *Freedom House* report states:

> ”…Cameroon is a market for child labor and a transit center for child trafficking….” (Freedom House (16 July 2009) *Freedom in the World 2009 – Cameroon)*

The *United States Department of State* Trafficking in Persons report for Cameroon notes:

> ”Cameroon is a source, transit, and destination country for women and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. Most victims are children trafficked within the country, with girls primarily trafficked for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Both boys and girls are also trafficked within Cameroon for forced labor in sweatshops, bars, restaurants, on tea and cocoa plantations, in mines, and for street vending and possibly for forced begging. Authorities report that within the country some parents loan their child for monetary compensation for forced labor in domestic service, street vending, or prostitution. Children are trafficked to Cameroon from Nigeria, Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo, Benin, and Niger for forced labor in agriculture, fishing, street vending, and spare-parts shops. Children from Mali are trafficked to Cameroon by religious instructors for forced begging. Cameroon is a transit country for children trafficked between Gabon and Nigeria, and from Nigeria to Saudi Arabia. It is a source country for women transported by sex

> trafficking rings to Europe, primarily France, Germany, and Switzerland. Reports indicate that traditional religious leaders may subject individuals to hereditary slavery practices rooted in ancestral master-slave relationships in some northern chiefdoms." (United States Department of State (16 June 2009) *Trafficking in Persons Report 2009 – Cameroon*)

The same report under section titled 'Prosecution' also states :

> "The Government of Cameroon demonstrated minimal efforts to combat trafficking through law enforcement means during the last year. Cameroon does not prohibit all forms of trafficking, though it criminalizes child trafficking and slavery through its 2005 Law Combating Child Trafficking and Slavery, which prescribes a penalty of 20 years' imprisonment – a punishment that is sufficiently stringent. Article 2(3) of Cameroon's Labor Code prohibits forced labor, prescribing an inadequate penalty of $100 to $3,000 in fines. The government's 2006 draft law prohibiting trafficking has yet to be finalized and approved. Penal Code Article 346 criminalizes procuring, aiding, facilitating, or profiting from the prostitution of a child less than 16 years of age. This article prescribes a punishment of one to ten years' imprisonment and a fine, which is sufficiently stringent and commensurate with penalties for rape. The government did not report any prosecutions or convictions of trafficking offenders during the year, though it reported that it investigated three trafficking cases, one of which was conducted jointly with Beninese authorities, and arrested one suspect in September 2008. Three suspects arrested in January 2008 for allegedly trafficking seven children have not yet been prosecuted. A suspect arrested in December 2007 for trafficking a child who died in his custody remains out on bail. A Yaounde court in 2008 held hearings on six additional trafficking cases derived from arrests made in 2007; the cases remain pending in the court system. The government did not investigate traditional leaders in the Northern Provinces suspected of keeping hereditary servants in conditions of involuntary servitude. The Ministry of Justice in November 2008 opened a pilot data center as part of its effort to develop a computerized system for the collection of trafficking crime data. The database is expected to be operational by 2012. In October 2008, the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms jointly funded with the UN an anti-trafficking seminar for law enforcement officers and magistrates on strategies for investigating and prosecuting trafficking offenses." (Ibid)

The January 2008 *United Kingdom Home Office* Country of Origin Information Report states:

> "Afrol News reported in undated gender country profiles, accessed on 11 September 2007, that:
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> "According to the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF), there have been reports of farm-to-city trafficking of girls who were promised jobs in cities, but were forced into prostitution or other labour." (United Kingdom Home Office (16 January 2008) *Country of Origin Information Report – Cameroon*)

The *United States Embassy in Yaounde, Cameroon* in a section titled 'Prosecution' states:

”The Government of Cameroon made weak law enforcement efforts to combat trafficking during the last year. Cameroon does not prohibit all forms of trafficking, though it criminalizes child trafficking and slavery through its 2005 anti-child trafficking law, which prescribes a penalty of 20 years' imprisonment - a punishment sufficiently stringent and more severe than that for rape. The government continued to draft a law prohibiting trafficking of adult women. In November 2006, police arrested nine individuals for trafficking 16 Nigerian children from Nigeria through Cameroon en route to Saudi Arabia. According to NGOs, the government may have prosecuted or convicted traffickers during the year; however, it did not report this due to its lack of a crime data collection system. Eight traffickers whose cases have been pending since 2005 are still awaiting trial. The government does not provide trafficking training to law enforcement officials.” (United States Embassy (12 June 2007) *Trafficking in Persons Report CAMEROON (TIER 2)*)

Section 2.2.2 of the *Country of Return Information (CRI) Project* under the heading 'Risk of becoming a victim of human trafficking or forced prostitution', states:

”The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking in persons, but it does prohibit slavery, prostitution, forced labour and other crimes relating to trafficking in persons.

Trafficking remains a problem8. The Anti-Child Trafficking Law, drafted by the government in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), took effect in December 2005. However, prosecuting has been weak.

Women and children face the greatest risk and are trafficked for sexual exploitation and forced labour. Most trafficking in children occurs within the country’s borders, while most trafficked women are transported out of the country.

Reports show that girls were internally trafficked from the Adamawa, North, Far North, and Northwest provinces to Douala and Yaounde to work as domestic servants, street vendors or prostitutes. Children were also internally trafficked to work on cocoa bean plantations.
“Cameroonian children are trafficked to Gabon and Equatorial Guinea for domestic servitude, and forced market and agricultural labour. Cameroon is a transit country for children trafficked between Gabon and Nigeria, and from Nigeria to Saudi Arabia. Cameroonian women are sent by trafficking rings to Europe, primarily France, Germany and Switzerland… The Government of Cameroon does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so, despite limited resources.”

There are testimonies that trafficked children are usually lured or forced and taken away by people known to the family, as well as by strangers trading children in exchange for various benefits, or to be used in mystical performances by secret societies9.” (Country of Return Information (CRI) Project (November 2007) *Country Sheet – Cameroon*)

References:

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources consulted:
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