

U. S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

[TEXT ONLY](#) [HOME](#) [WHAT'S NEW](#) [FAQS](#) [SEARCH](#) [GLOSSARY](#) [FEEDBACK](#) [TRANSLATE](#) [PRINT/PAGE](#)

Immigration Services and Benefits Programs

Overview

[National Customer Service Center \(NCSC\)](#)

[Emergency Travel](#)

[Naturalization](#)

[Citizenship](#)

[Green Cards \(LPR\)](#)

[Temporary Visitors](#)

[Employer Information](#)

[Inter-Country Adoptions](#)

[Temporary Protected Status](#)

Asylum

[Overview](#)

[History](#)

[Training Materials](#)

[Resource Information Center](#)

[Asylum FAQ](#)

[Two Paths to Asylum](#)

[Affirmative Asylum at a Glance](#)

[Affirmative Asylum Process](#)

[Types of Asylum Decisions](#)

[Coercive Family Planning](#)

Cameroon

Response to Information Request Number:	CMR03001.ZAR
Date:	November 21, 2002
Subject:	Cameroon: Information on Treatment of Homosexuals
From:	INS Resource Information Center
Keywords:	Cameroon / Disadvantaged groups / Discrimination based on sexual orientation / Gay rights

Query:

What is the climate like for homosexuals in Cameroon? Are they harassed or harmed by the general population or government agents? Are there laws against homosexuality? If so, are these laws enforced?

Response:

ARE THERE LAWS AGAINST HOMOSEXUALITY IN CAMEROON?

Article 347 of the Cameroon Penal Code criminalizes sexual contact between members of the same sex with a penalty of six months to five years in prison and a fine of CFA francs 20,000 to 200,000. If the prohibited acts are carried out with a minor of sixteen to twenty-one years of age, the penalties are doubled. Homosexual acts both between men and between women are illegal in Cameroon (ILGA Apr 2000).

ENFORCEMENT OF THE LAWS AGAINST HOMOSEXUALITY AND ATTITUDES TOWARD HOMOSEXUALS

Citing information obtained from the British High Commission in Yaounde, Cameroon in September 2001, the UK Immigration and Nationality Directorate states in its April 2002 CAMEROON ASSESSMENT:

**Reasonable Fear
Screenings**

"If a complaint is lodged [regarding homosexual activity] the police will investigate and if appropriate prosecute" (IND Apr 2002).

Refugees

Humanitarian Parole

**SAWE (Verification
Program)**

The Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board, Research Directorate (IRB-RD) also cites two French-language media sources which reported that a Swiss citizen was arrested in Cameroon and sentenced to 17 months imprisonment due to his homosexuality (IRB-RD Jun 2001).

According to BEHIND THE MASK, a website on gay and lesbian affairs in Africa:

"In strictly legal terms, there are indications that there is currently nobody in prison under the provisions of Art 347 of the Penal Code..." (May 2000).

In an interview with an Anglican magazine, THE WITNESS, Florence Monevondo, a Cameroonian living in Europe, reported that her gay brother was sentenced to prison for three years with probation and charged a fine of 150,000 FCFA. Ms. Monevondo stated in the interview: "The sentence could have been worse" (THE WITNESS Jun 2002). The article does not specify whether or not Ms. Monevondo's brother was prosecuted under Article 347. In the interview, Ms. Monevondo continued:

"The gay world in my country is diversified. There are gays who openly advertise their preference for same-sex partners, but not without risking their lives, since homosexuality is unlawful in Cameroon. These open gays lack stability and long-term relationships" (THE WITNESS Jun 2002).

"There are also closeted gays and lesbians: people who live their love stories in discretion and silence. All social classes are represented in this category. In sum, I feel like it [is] still difficult for the majority to move past the big obstacles that prevent them from coming out" (THE WITNESS Jun 2002).

"There [are] also some 'occasional bisexuals,' who in reality depend on their same-sex partner because of financial interests" (THE WITNESS Jun 2002).

ARE HOMOSEXUALS HARASSED BY THE POPULATION OR BY GOVERNMENT AGENTS?

At a Congress on AIDS that took place in Malaysia in 1999, a Cameroonian participant addressed social attitudes toward homosexuality in his country:

"Jean Marie Talom from Cameroon referred to the stark situation of homosexuals in that country where a survey revealed that 92% of the population condemns gays and article 345 of the legal code sanctions homosexual acts. He reflected on the difficulties faced by

the National AIDS Committee in providing outreach to gays and lesbians both in terms of prevention as well as support for those who are HIV positive. Confidentiality as well as the establishing trust are fundamental and require much time and effort..." (Health and Development Networks 6 Dec 1999).

According to an update by a "correspondent" on the website BEHIND THE MASK:

"On the social front, at least in Douala and Yaounde (the two biggest cities in the country), each city has a couple of bars where gay men (little lesbian visibility yet) meet on weekend evenings, but neither city can boast an established strictly speaking lesbigay joint. My own perception is that there is mounting interest - if little money - amongst the community and chances are, one will surface soon" (BEHIND THE MASK May 2000).

Another article appearing in THE WITNESS magazine referred to a campaign of "slandering homosexuals" in Cameroonian newspapers during 2001 (THE WITNESS May 2002):

"At the end of the year 2001, newspapers targeted the diplomatic corps. A West African ambassador was 'outed' as a homosexual. There was no official reaction from the government concerning this matter, but it was without surprise that Cameroonians noticed that the Nuncio Apostolic replaced this fellow in his functions as the chairman of ambassadors in Cameroon" (THE WITNESS May 2002).

[The Nuncio Apostolic represents the Holy See in countries that exchange ambassadors with the Vatican, and is often as a courtesy made "dean" of the diplomatic corps in the country of representation] (Infoplease.com 2000).

One article used to exemplify the media campaign against homosexuals in Cameroon is entitled "Who are these men who rape men?" and appears in CONFIDENCE MAGAZINE, a South African business quarterly:

"According to [the author of the article], homosexuality is an abomination, and homosexuals are prostitutes or disappointed men—in sum, animals. For these 'sexual demons' (his expression), he calls for the death penalty, or at least life imprisonment" (THE WITNESS May 2002).

Specific examples of harassment of gays and lesbians by the population or by agents of the government have not been found. An Africa specialist at a Washington non-governmental organization (NGO) who was raised in Cameroon and who left the country a decade ago stated that the issue of homosexuality was not in the public domain at that time and that the government did not actively harass homosexuals at that time. He did not have any information on current harassment or persecution of homosexuals in Cameroon

by agents of the government or private citizens (NGO representative 9 Oct 2002).

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC 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.

References:

BEHIND THE MASK. "Cameroon: Update" (Zaire: May 2000)
http://www.mask.org.za/SECTIONS/AfricaPerCountry/ABC/cameroon/cameroon_2.htm
[Accessed 20 Nov 2002].

Health and Development Networks. "Men Who Have Sex With Men Voice Concerns"
FIFTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AIDS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: 6 Dec 1999, 23-27 Oct 1999)
http://www.hdnet.org/Paris1999_reports/20.htm [Accessed 9 Oct 2002].

Immigration and Refugee Board, Research Directorate (IRB-RD). CAMEROUN: SITUATION DES PERSONNES HOMOSEXUELLES, Y COMPRIS LEUR TRAITEMENT PAS [sic] LES AUTORITES ET PAR LA SOCIETE EN GENERAL, Response to Information Request (Ottawa: CMR37459.F, 27 Jun 2001) http://www.irb.gc.ca/cgi-bin/foliocgi.exe/refinfo_e? [Accessed 19 Nov 2002].

Infoplease.com. "Apostolic, Nuncio" (2000)
<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/society/A0836185.html> [Accessed 18 Nov 2002].

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA). "World Legal Survey: Cameroon" (Apr 2000) http://www.ilga.org/Information/legal_survey/africa/cameroun.htm
[Accessed 9 Oct 2002].

Non-governmental organization (NGO) representative. Telephone interview (Washington, D.C.: 9 Oct 2002).

UK Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND). CAMEROON ASSESSMENT (Apr 2002)
<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk> [Accessed 20 Nov 2002].

THE WITNESS. "Joseph: A Courageous Cameroonian Lesbian" (May 2002)
<http://thewitness.org/agw/nyeck.050302.html> [Accessed 9 Oct 2002].

THE WITNESS. "My Gay Brother was Condemned to Three Years of Imprisonment" (Jun 2002) <http://thewitness.org/agw/nyeck061202.html> [Accessed 9 Oct 2002].

Last Modified 05/05/2003