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Commission de l'immigration  
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### CMR103398.FE

Cameroon: The treatment of people with HIV/AIDS by society and government authorities

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According to the United Nations (UN), in 2007, there were more than 500,000 people infected with HIV in Cameroon (UN Sept. 2008). According to the website News.cn, affiliated with the Xinhua news agency, the National Committee Against AIDS (Comité national de lutte contre le sida, CNLS) under the Cameroon Department of Public Health (Ministère de la Santé publique du Cameroun) estimated the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS at 5.1 percent in 2009 (Xinhua 29 Nov. 2009).

Two sources consulted by the Research Directorate indicated that people with HIV/AIDS are not subjected to ill treatment in Cameroon (ACDHDP 12 Feb. 2010; UN 12 Feb. 2010). In a 12 February 2010 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Cameroonian Association of Human Rights, Democracy and Peace (Association camerounaise des droits de l'homme, la démocratie et la paix, ACDHDP) stated that his organization has never been aware of a case in which the authorities had subjected someone to particular treatment solely because he or she had AIDS.

However, other sources reported HIV-positive people being stigmatized and discriminated against (Mutations 11 Feb. 2010; VSO 20 Sept. 2008 2009; AllAfrica 10 June 2008).

In an 11 February 2010 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a journalist with the Yaoundé daily newspaper Mutations stated that people who are HIV-positive are generally stigmatized, rejected, marginalized or discriminated against in both their social and private lives. According to the journalist, because the public is prejudiced against them, some people choose to hide that they are HIV-positive (Mutations 11 Feb. 2010). Also, in an article published on 20 September 2008 concerning people with HIV/AIDS, the director of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Canada, a non-governmental organization (NGO) that handles international development projects in various countries around the world, stated that [translation] "the stigmatization of sick people is a real scourge... . Since AIDS is perceived to be a shameful illness, families reject those who are infected" (VSO 20 Sept. 2008). According to the Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (Réseau sur l'éthique, le droit et le sida, REDS), people infected with HIV/AIDS "are perceived by some as plague-stricken and therefore dangerous. Their rights are trampled on a daily basis at various levels of society, particularly within their own families, at hospitals, in the workplace and in prison"

(Xinhua 29 Nov. 2009). According to the president of the Cameroonian Network of Associations of People Living with AIDS (Réseau camerounais des associations des personnes vivant avec le sida, RéCAP), some people have reportedly lost their jobs or have been [translation] "defamed" (slandered) because they are HIV-positive (ibid.). Further data or examples of cases of people infected with HIV/AIDS who reported being stigmatized or discriminated against could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

## Protection

With regard to legislation, two sources indicated that there is no law that sets out the rights and obligations of people infected with HIV/AIDS in Cameroon (ACDHDP 12 Feb. 2010; UN 12 Feb. 2010). However, an article published on 30 October 2008 by the UN Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) reports that, in 2002, the Cameroon government proposed a law criminalizing the wilful transmission of HIV. That draft law specifically prescribed the following:

[translation]

'Life imprisonment for anyone who knowingly has HIV/AIDS and wilfully engages in unprotected sexual relations, thereby infecting another person with HIV/AIDS.'

The draft sets out that if those relations do not result in another person becoming infected, the punishment shall be a term of imprisonment of five years and a fine of up to one million CFA francs (1,900 dollars). (UN 30 Oct. 2008)

According to a jurist who is the REDS coordinator, such a law could lead to [translation] "difficulties in proving the intentional or wilful nature of the act; and reinforce the prejudice against people living with HIV/AIDS of their being 'evil people'" (ibid.). Denouncing the stigmatization and the lack of legislation, people infected with HIV, under the leadership of the REDS, presented the Cameroon National Assembly with an alternative text establishing the rights and obligations of people with HIV/AIDS (Xinhua 29 Nov. 2009). Additional information on this draft law could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

As for raising public awareness and the treatment and care of infected persons, individuals who have HIV/AIDS have formed several associations in order to meet their needs (Xinhua 29 Nov. 2009). RéCAP is such an example; it consisted of three associations when it was founded in 2000 and forty-six in 2009 (ibid.). These associations are present in the country's 10 regions (ibid.). Additional information on this network could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

## Reference

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Xinhua. 29 November 2009. "Cameroun : les personnes vivant avec le HIV/AIDS dénoncent la stigmatisation et l'absence d'une législation."  
<[http://french.news.cn/afrique/2009-11/29/c\\_1398260\\_2.htm](http://french.news.cn/afrique/2009-11/29/c_1398260_2.htm)> [Accessed 11 Feb. 2010]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources:** : Attempts to contact the Ligue camerounaise des droits de l'homme (LCDH) and the Association des frères et sœurs unis pour l'espoir et la solidarité (AFSUPES) were unsuccessful.

**Internet sites, including:** : Afrik.com, Amnesty International (AI), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme (FIDH), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, International Crisis Group, Organisation internationale de la francophonie (OIF), Radio France internationale (RFI).

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