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Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Commission de l'immigration et du statut de réfugié du Canada

Canada

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Cameroon: The Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (Union des populations du Cameroun, UPC), including its structure and its importance on the political scene; the treatment of its members by the authorities (2011-August 2013)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

The Union of the Peoples of Cameroon (UPC) is an opposition political party in Cameroon (*Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013; *PHW* 2012, 225; International Crisis Group, 25 May 2010, 15). The UPC was founded in 1948 (*Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013; *PHW* 2012, 226). The *Political Handbook of the World 2012* (*PHW*) describes the UPC as a "Marxist-Leninist" party (*ibid.*). The UPC was outlawed in 1955, but continued to operate clandestinely for 30 years (*Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013; *PHW* 2012, 226; *Journal du Cameroun* 24 Oct. 2011). According to the *PHW*, during this clandestine period, the UPC became "the most prominent of the groups opposing Cameroon's one-party regime" (*PHW* 2012, 226).

The party was legalized once again in 1991 (*PHW* 2012, 226; *Journal du Cameroun* 24 Oct. 2011). The *PHW* explains that the Democratic Rally of the Cameroon People (Rassemblement démocratique du peuple camerounais, RDPC), the party of Cameroonian president Paul Biya, who was in power in 2012, was the only legal party in the country from 1966 to 1991, until the other parties were legalized in December 1990. (*PHW* 2012, 225-226).

2. Structure

There are several factions within the UPC (*Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013; *PHW* 2012, 226-227; *Le Messenger* 16 Jan. 2013). Some sources refer to the diverse factions as "wings" of the party (MboaNews 12 Sept. 2012; *Le Messenger* 18 Jan. 2012; *Jeune Afrique* 3 Oct. 2011).

2.1 UPC-Ntumazah

The party split in 1992 into one faction led by Augustin Frédéric Kodock, the secretary general of the party, and another led by Ndeh Ntumazah (*PHW* 2012, 226; Bonaberi 26 Oct. 2011). According to *PHW*, Ndeh Ntumazah was "the last surviving founder of the UPC" (*PHW* 2012, 226). According to Bonaberi, an information website on Cameroon, the faction led by Augustin Frédéric Kodock was described as "moderate," whereas that of Ndeh Ntumazah was considered "more radical" (Bonaberi 26 Oct. 2011). *PHW* states that Ndeh Ntumazah's faction wanted to boycott the 1992 legislative elections, while Augustin Frédéric Kodock participated in them (*PHW* 2012, 226). However, according to Bonaberi, the split was caused by Augustin Frédéric Kodock's decision not to run for president and to give his support to Paul Biya during that year's presidential elections (Bonaberi 26 Oct. 2011). The International Crisis Group states that the UPC is [International Crisis Group English version] "split between the opportunist Augustin Kudock and the principled but ageing Ndeh Ntumazah" (25 May 2010, 15). According to the Cameroonian daily *Cameroon Tribune*, Ndeh Ntumazah died in January 2010 and was entitled to a state funeral because of his role as an activist who fought for the unification and independence of Cameroon (*Cameroon Tribune* 5 Apr. 2010). The *Cameroon Tribune* describes him as the "late National President" of the UPC but notes that his family did not allow the secretary general of the party, Augustin Frédéric Kodock, to speak at the funeral, as the two men had not been in contact for years (*ibid.*).

Additional information on this faction could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

2.2 UPC Kodock

One of the factions is called UPC(K) (CamerounActu 17 Jan. 2012; *PHW* 2012, 227; *Jeune Afrique* 3 Oct. 2011). According to the Cameroonian daily *Le Messenger*, this faction is a wing that some identify as being [translation] "pro-government" (18 Jan. 2012). This faction was led by Augustin Frédéric Kodock until his death in October 2011 (Bonaberi 26 Oct. 2011; *Journal du Cameroun* 24 Oct. 2011). According to the *Journal du Cameroun*, he was the one who worked

for the re-legalization of the UPC in 1991 (ibid.). He was elected secretary general of the UPC in 1991 (African Success 7 Nov. 2008). He retained that title until his death (Bonaberi 26 Oct. 2011; *Journal du Cameroun* 24 Oct. 2011).

Sources indicate that Augustin Frédéric Kodock allied himself with President Paul Biya and his party for several years and held several cabinet posts within his successive governments (*PHW* 2012, 227; Bonaberi 26 Oct. 2011; *Journal du Cameroun* 24 Oct. 2011). Augustin Frédéric Kodock was dismissed from his cabinet post in September 2007 (*PHW* 2012, 227; African Success 7 Nov. 2008). According to Bonaberi, he then [translation] "turned his back" on his alliance with President Biya's party (Bonaberi 26 Oct. 2011). Two sources state that some people thought that this exclusion was decided upon because of his declining support (Bonaberi 26 Oct. 2011; African Success 7 Nov. 2008). However, *PHW* states that Augustin Frédéric Kodock was removed from cabinet because of allegations of embezzlement within his ministry (*PHW* 2012, 227).

Sources indicate that Augustin Frédéric Kodock tried to run for president in 2011, but that his candidacy was rejected (Bonaberi 26 Oct. 2011; *Journal du Cameroun* 24 Oct. 2011; *Jeune Afrique* 3 Oct. 2011). *Jeune Afrique* states that he subsequently gave his support to the presidential candidate from the Cameroonian Democratic Union (Union démocratique du Cameroun, UDC) rather than to the MANIDEM candidate, another UPC faction (3 Oct. 2011).

2.3 UPC Hogbe Nlend

Another faction is led by Henri Hogbe Nlend (*Le Messenger* 18 Jan. 2012; *PHW* 2012, 226-227). This one is known as UPC(N) (ibid.) or UPC(H) (L'Actu 24 Jan. 2012; *Mutations* 19 Jan. 2012; CamerounActu 17 Jan. 2012). According to *Le Messenger*, some people consider the UPC(N) to be "pro-government" (18 Jan. 2012). *PHW* provides the following information on the UPC(N) (*PHW* 2012, 226-227): In 2001, the UPC was reportedly split once again into factions, one led by Augustin Frédéric Kodock and another led by Henri Hogbe Nlend, the party's presidential candidate in 1992 and 1997, who was named a minister in the cabinet following the 1997 presidential elections. The faction led by Augustin Frédéric Kodock became increasingly anti-Biya, whereas the faction led by Henri Hogbe Nlend continued to support President Biya. In the 2002 legislative elections, the national election board of Cameroon treated the two factions as a single party, although the candidates identified themselves as candidates for the UPC(K), for the faction led by Augustin Frédéric Kodock, or for the UPC(N), for the faction led by Henri Hogbe Nlend. However, *PHW* reports that the UPC(N) joined a coalition of political parties seeking to run a single candidate against President Biya in the 2004 presidential elections.

2.4 The [translation] "faithful" UPC

Another faction of the UPC is the so-called "faithful" (*Cameroon Tribune* 3 Apr. 2013; *Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013; *Le Messenger* 16 Jan. 2013). According to *Le Messenger*, this faction [translation] "claims to uphold the original positions of the founding fathers" of the UPC (ibid.). According to the Cameroonian daily *Aurore Plus*, this faction takes the position that the Government of Cameroon illegally gave legal status to the new party created by Augustin Frédéric Kodock, when the former UPC still existed (9 Aug. 2012). Media reports indicate that the leaders of this faction take the view that the faction close to Auguste Frédéric Kodock is close to the government (ibid.; MboaNews 12 Sept. 2012). MboaNews, a news website in Cameroon, also notes that the faithful faction was previously sued by the Kodock faction for usurping the UPC logo (ibid.).

Sources indicate that, in 2013, the secretary general of the faithful UPC was Albert Moutoudou [or Motoundou] (*Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013; MboaNews 27 Feb. 2013), and that Alexis Ndema Same was the president (*Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013). This faction was led by Samuel Mack-Kit until 2011 (*Cameroon Tribune* 3 Apr. 2013; MboaNews 25 Aug. 2011).

2.5 MANIDEM

Another group with ties to the UPC is the African Movement for New Independence and Democracy (Mouvement africain pour la nouvelle indépendance et la démocratie, MANIDEM) (*Le Messenger* 16 Jan. 2013; *PHW* 2012, 229; Europa World n.d.). According to Europa World, MANIDEM was [translation] "formerly" a UPC faction (ibid.). The International Crisis Group reports that the party was formerly known as the UPC-MANIDEM (25 May 2010, 22). According to *PHW*, it is comprised of former UPC members (*PHW*, 2012, 229). According to the International Crisis Group, MANIDEM "maintain[s] the UPC's radical tradition, while being blocked by the law courts from using the party's name" (25 May 2010, 22). Sources indicate that MANIDEM is led by (Pierre) Abanda Kpama (*Le Messenger* 16 Jan. 2013; Europa World n.d.). However, the 2012 edition of *PHW* states that Anicet Ekanè led this party (*PHW* 2012, 229). According to the African Elections Database, a database that collects election results from Sub-Saharan African countries from various sources (African Elections Database n.d.), Anicet Ekanè was MANIDEM's presidential candidate for the 2011 presidential elections (ibid. 25 Mar. 2012).

2.6 Attempts at Reconciliation and New Divisions

Members of the various factions of the UPC have attempted to reunify the party (*Cameroon Tribune* 21 Mar. 2012; CamerounActu 17 Jan. 2012; L'Actu 24 Jan. 2012). Factions of the UPC were reported to have met in Yaoundé on 17 January 2012 with the stated goal of [translation] "completing the process of gathering and unifying the movement" (L'Actu 24 Jan. 2012). In particular, sources indicate that Henri Hogbe Nlend participated in these reunification efforts (*Cameroon Tribune* 21 Mar. 2012; L'Actu 24 Jan. 2012). Sources indicate, however, that the faithful UPC did not participate in these attempts at reunification (MboaNews 12 Sept. 2012; *Le Messenger* 17 July 2013; *Cameroon Tribune* 21 Mar. 2012).

New divisions, however, appeared within the Kodock faction following his death (*La Nouvelle Expression* 14 Mar. 2013; *Cameroon Tribune* 21 Mar. 2012; *CameroonActu* 17 Jan. 2012). According to media reports, three separate sub-factions of the UPC presented their own lists of candidates for the senatorial elections in April 2013 (*Mutations* 19 Mar. 2013; *Cameroon Tribune* 18 Mar. 2013). These three sub-factions were allegedly the UPC-Ouandji, the UPC Bapoo and the UPC Papy Ndoumbe (ibid.; *Mutations* 19 Mar. 2013).

The Cameroonian daily *La Nouvelle Expression* states that three of the five existing factions of the UPC that had presented lists of candidates saw them rejected by the national election board and the constitutional council (12 July 2013).

Media reports indicate, however, that various sub-factions agreed to present a joint list of candidates for the municipal and legislative elections planned for September 2013 (*Le Messager* 17 July 2013; *La Nouvelle Expression* 12 July 2013; *Le Jour* 5 July 2013). According to the media, the leaders of these sub-factions came to an agreement with the support of the minister of territorial administration and decentralization (*Le Messager* 17 July 2013; *Le Jour* 5 July 2013).

3. Importance of the UPC on the Political Scene

Sources mention that the UPC held no seats in the National Assembly in 2012 (*La Nouvelle Expression* 12 July 2013; *Mutations* 19 Jan. 2012). During the 2007 legislative elections, the party lost the three seats it had held since the 2002 legislative elections (African Elections Database 25 Mar. 2012). According to the Cameroon-Info.Net website, no UDP faction won a seat in the April 2013 senatorial elections (Cameroon-Info.Net 29 Apr. 2013).

L'Actu, a Cameroonian information portal, states that the UPC [translation] "gained more attention in the press for miscellaneous activities than for the strength of its policies or for playing a real role in national politics, where they hope to play leading roles" (24 Jan. 2012). The *Journal du Cameroun* states that the party has been [translation] "undermined by turf wars," adding that the various factions of the party that have emerged have caused it to "lose credibility" (24 Oct. 2011). According to *Jeune Afrique*, members blamed Augustin Frédéric Kodock for [translation] "the UPC's loss of prestige," resulting from his participation in President Biya's governments (*Jeune Afrique* 3 Oct. 2011).

4. Treatment of UPC Members by the Authorities

Information on the treatment of members of the various factions of the UPC in Cameroon was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Media sources indicate that the president and secretary general of the "Faithful" faction of the UPC were arrested in February 2013 when they were protesting against the election board of Cameroon (*Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013; *Le Messager* 27 Feb. 2013; MboaNews 27 Feb. 2013). According to the sources, they were charged with organizing an illegal protest (*Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013; MboaNews 27 Feb. 2013) and disturbing the peace (MboaNews 27 Feb. 2013). However, according to *Aurore Plus*, the accused maintain that they had advised the authorities of the staging of the protest, in accordance with the law (*Aurore Plus* 9 Aug. 2013). *Aurore Plus* adds that the two accused remain free [translation] "on bail" pending their next appearance before a judge in October 2013 (ibid.).

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.

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