



Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié du Canada

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Cameroon: Current treatment of homosexuals (April 2005)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Several sources state that homosexuality is illegal and punishable by law in Cameroon (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 5; France 21 Sept. 2004; Cameroon-Info.net 21 July 2004; Minorités.org 22 Dec. 2003). The Cameroonian penal code calls for a prison sentence of between 6 months and 5 years and a fine ranging from 20,000 to 200,000 CFA francs [approximately CAN\$48.92 to \$489.20 (Bank of Canada Mar. 2005)] for any person who engages in sexual acts with a person of the same sex (Minorités.org 22 Dec. 2003; *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 5; United Kingdom 12 May 2004, Sec. 12.1). Prosecution under this law, however, is rare (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 5; see also United Kingdom 12 May 2004, Sec. 12.2).

According to *Le Monde*, homosexuals are discriminated against in Cameroon (9 Oct. 2004). *Country Reports 2004* states that homosexuals suffer from harassment and extortion by law enforcement officials (28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 5). This information could not be corroborated by the other sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In a report on a fact-finding mission to Cameroon from 17 to 25 January 2004, the United Kingdom's Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) indicated that Cameroon society is prejudiced against homosexuals, but that homosexuality is tolerated in urban areas; in rural areas, however, "homosexuality is regarded as abhorrent, and anyone who is discovered to be homosexual is likely to be expelled from his/her community" (United Kingdom 12 May 2004, Sec. 12.3 and 12.4). According to the same report, however, in cities like Douala and Yaoundé, there is an established male homosexual community with its own bars and clubs (*ibid.*, Sec. 12).

According to the Website Minorités.org, the results of a study conducted as part of a master's thesis in sociology at the University of Yaoundé showed that gays and lesbians, in order to avoid [translation] "social reprobation" and the [translation] "hostility" of Cameroonian society toward homosexuals, have adopted a [translation] "strategy to camouflage their true sexual activities" (22 Dec. 2003). For many homosexuals, according to the study, this strategy consists in having a pretend partner of the opposite sex in order to be accepted socially, while practising their homosexual activities in secret (Minorités.org 22 Dec. 2003). An article published on the Website of the National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), a British non-governmental organization that "provides practical help and advice to people facing deportation" (NCADC 12

Feb. 2005), reported that Ebana Dieudonné, a Cameroonian citizen, "identifies as gay, but he was also married to a woman in Cameroon, who was fully aware of his [homosexual] relationship with his employer" (ibid. n.d.). According to the same article, Ebana fears that, if he is sent back to Cameroon, he will be arrested and imprisoned (ibid.).

However, the IND report states that the consensus reached between the various European Union Heads of Mission was that claims for asylum based on homosexuality are ill-founded (United Kingdom 12 May 2004, Sec. 12.5).

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 additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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United Kingdom. 12 May 2004. Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND), Home Office. "Report of Fact-Finding Mission to Cameroon." <http://www.workingintheuk.gov.uk/ind/en/home/0/country_information/fact_finding_missions.Maincontent.0002.file.tmp/Cameroon%20FFM.pdf>

[Accessed 6 Apr. 2005]

Additional Sources Consulted

The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) did not provide information within the time constraints for this Response.

Publications : *Africa Confidential* , *Africa Research Bulletin* , *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent*

Internet sites, including : AllAfrica, Amnesty International (AI), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)

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