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6 May 2005

CMR43537.FE

Cameroon: The October 2004 presidential elections, including the process, the monitoring efforts, the election results, the reaction of government organizations and opposition parties, as well as the treatment of opposition party members by government authorities (2004-May 2005)

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The last presidential elections in Cameroon were held on 11 October 2004 (*Keesing's* Oct. 2004, 46242; *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 3; *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 17-23 Oct. 2004, 70; *Elections Around the World* 10 Feb. 2005). Paul Biya received more than 70 per cent of the votes and was re-elected (AFP 25 Oct. 2004; *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 3; *Keesing's* Oct. 2004, 46242; *Africa Research Bulletin* 31 Oct. 2004, 15948; *Elections Around the World* 10 Feb. 2005). Of the main opposition candidates, John Fru Ndi received 17.4 per cent of the votes, Adamou Ndam Njoya received 4.5 per cent and Garga Haman Adji received 3.7 per cent (AFP 25 Oct. 2004; *Elections Around the World* 10 Feb. 2005; *Africa Research Bulletin* 31 Oct. 2004, 15948). Over 82 per cent of the population turned out to vote (*ibid.*; *Elections Around the World* 10 Feb. 2005; AFP 25 Oct. 2004), and more than 10 candidates ran in the elections (AP 15 Oct. 2004; *ibid.* 12 Oct. 2004; *ibid.* 11 Oct. 2004; AFP 25 Oct. 2004). An Agence France Presse (AFP) article indicated that none of the candidates, aside from those mentioned above, received more than 0.5 per cent of the votes (*ibid.*).

Prior to the 11 October 2004 elections, the candidates for the opposition parties denounced irregularities in the electoral list registration and identified risks of fraud (*ibid.* 4 Oct. 2004; see also AFP 8 Oct. 2004). However, according to the National Elections Observatory in Cameroon (Observatoire national des élections du Cameroun, ONEL), all of the electoral lists had been revised, and the names of between 4,800 and 5,000 illegally registered people were removed from the lists (AFP 8 Oct. 2004; AP 11 Oct. 2004). The opposition candidates also accused the Cameroon government of delaying the release of the funding for their electoral campaigns (*ibid.*).

As soon as the election results were known, the opposition candidates disputed them, claiming that "widespread fraud" had been committed (AP 15 Oct. 2004; *Africa Research Bulletin* 31 Oct. 2004, 15948; *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 3). An appeal for the annulment of the election was made to the Constitutional Council, made up of 11 Supreme Court judges (AP 15 Oct. 2004), who ruled against the request, thus validating the election results (AFP 22 Oct. 2004; *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 3; *Keesing's* Oct. 2004, 46242).

An AFP article indicated that over 232 national and international observers

were deployed to about 20,600 polling stations to oversee the 11 October 2004 elections (11 Oct. 2004). However, various sources indicated that many electoral irregularities were witnessed, including multiple voting, voters who were refused the right to vote because their names were not on the electoral list, insufficient ballots and the poor quality of the ink used to identify people who had already voted (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 3; *Keesing's* Oct. 2004, 46242; AFP 16 Oct. 2004; *Africa Research Bulletin* 31 Oct. 2004, 15948). Speaking on behalf of the Commonwealth, Joe Clark, former prime minister of Canada and leader of the observer group, stated that the 11 October 2004 elections were poorly managed and "lacked credibility" (AFP 16 Oct. 2004; see also *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 3; *Africa Research Bulletin* 31 Dec. 2004, 16019). However, he concluded that "even given the serious deficiency in the management of the register, we believe that the intention of those who voted was reflected in the result" (AFP 16 Oct. 2004). However, the representative of the International Organisation of the Francophonie said that the Cameroon polls were generally "well organized" and had taken place "in accordance with the legal provisions and regulations" (AP 15 Oct. 2004). Quoting several observers, including former US congressmen, an AFP article indicated that the Cameroon polls were "fair and transparent" (14 Oct. 2004). Speaking on behalf of the Catholic observers, the archbishop of Douala described the election as a "masquerade" (RFI 20 Oct. 2004).

No information on the treatment of members of the opposition parties by government authorities could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, one source indicated that the Cameroon police prevented Fru Ndi, the Social Democratic Front (SDF) candidate, from holding a press conference at which he wanted to announce that he was the real election winner (*Africa Research Bulletin* 31 Oct. 2004, 15948).

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.

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Internet sites, including: AllAfrica, Amnesty International, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Human Rights Watch (HRW), International Crisis Group (ICG), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), MISNA, United States Department of State.

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