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25 May 2005

CMR43538.FE

Cameroon: Female genital mutilation (FGM), including the prevalence of this practice and the ethnic groups most affected; laws on FGM; and state protection (2002-May 2005)

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In Cameroon, 20 per cent of women are victims of female genital mutilation (FGM) (AI 2004; Canada Mar. 2002; CRLP 2000b, 52; IPU n.d.; see also OMCT 2001). FGM is particularly common in the North, East and Southwest provinces (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 5; CRLP 2000a, 77; UK 12 May 2004, para. 9.9; see also AFROL n.d.; AI 2004; OMCT 2001, 14; IPU n.d.; PANA 2 Feb. 2005). In some regions, this practice [IPU English version] "is said to affect 100% of Muslim girls and 63.6% of Christian girls" (IPU n.d.; see also PANA 2 Feb. 2005). Three forms of FGM are performed in Cameroon: clitoridectomy, excision and infibulation (OMCT 7 July 2004, 133). Infibulation is performed in particular in the Kajifu region in the Southwest Province (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 5).

Information on the ethnic groups most affected by FGM was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. For further information on the practice of FGM among members of the Bamiléké ethnic group, see CMR43249.E of 25 January 2005.

According to Amnesty International, a national chapter of the Inter-African Committee (IAC) on traditional practices affecting the health of women and children was created in 1992, and it is supported by the government (2004). Cameroon is a signatory to several international women's and children's rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (CRLP 2000b, 13, 19). "Rights to physical integrity and health" are also protected under the Cameroonian Constitution and the Penal Code (ibid. 2000a, 77).

There is no law prohibiting FGM (AFROL n.d.; AI 22 Sept. 2004; ibid. 2004; CRLP 2000a, 77; OMCT 2001, 14; see also CRLP Feb. 2005; IRIN Mar. 2005), and the Cameroonian government has no policy to prohibit the practice, nor does it have programs for victims of FGM (CRLP 2000a, 77; see also OMCT 7 July 2004). According to information obtained in a 17 to 25 January 2004 fact-finding mission to Cameroon by the United Kingdom's Immigration and Nationality Directorate, the government criticizes FGM "but does not prohibit [it]" (12 May 2004, para. 9.11).

In a 2001 report, the World Organisation Against Torture (Organisation mondiale contre la torture, OMCT) indicated that the government had launched an awareness campaign in some regions of the country about the harmful effects of FGM (2001, 14). However, according to *Country Reports 2004*, the government did not implement any such programs during 2004 (28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 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.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Two professors and a women's rights organization in Cameroon did not respond to a request for information within the time constraints for this Response.

Publications : *Africa Research Bulletin* (2003-2005), *WIN News* (2003, Vol. 29, Nos. 1-4).

Internet sites, including : AllAfrica, CEDAW, *CIA World Factbook* , European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Famafrigue, Feminist Women's Health Center, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, Inter-African Committee (IAC) on Traditional Practices, International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* , Radio France internationale (RFI), World Health Organization (WHO), World News Connection (WNC).

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