



Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

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

Canada

[Home](#) > [Research](#) > [Responses to Information Requests](#)

RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIRs](#) | [Help](#)

17 May 2005

CMR43570.FE

Cameroon: Witchcraft in Cameroon; tribes or geographical areas in which witchcraft is practised; the government's attitude (2004)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

No specific information on the tribes or geographical areas in which witchcraft is practised could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, a number of sources address the issue of witchcraft in legal terms (Afrik.com 26 Aug. 2004; *Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005; *Cameroon Tribune* 22 Mar. 2005a).

According to an article on Afrik.com, witchcraft is widespread in Cameroon, although it is considered an offence under section 251 of the Cameroonian penal code (26 Aug. 2004). Two other provisions of the penal code [translation] "state that witchcraft may be an aggravating factor for dishonest acts" (Afrik.com 26 Aug. 2004). A person convicted of witchcraft may face a prison term of 2 to 10 years and a fine of 5,000 to 100,000 CFA francs [between CDN\$12.17 and CDN\$243.41 (Xe.com 13 May 2005)], and the decision is left to the judge's discretion, [translation] "which, without evidence, is often based on the statements made in court, which, of course, can lead to many errors" (Afrik.com 26 Aug. 2004).

Country Reports 2004 also states that "[t]he practice of witchcraft is a criminal offense" under Cameroonian law, and that, in general, individuals are prosecuted for this offence only in conjunction with another offence, such as murder (28 Feb. 2005).

A seminar on justice and witchcraft was held in March 2005 at the Université catholique d'Afrique centrale in Nkolbisson, Cameroon (*Cameroon Tribune* 18 Mar. 2005). The *Cameroon Tribune* states that many observers at this seminar agreed that [translation] "the majority of legal decisions based on the penal code are unacceptable" (ibid.).

Mounyol Mboussi, author of the book *Sorcellerie en justice au Cameroun*, explained that Cameroonian legislation does not define [translation] "witchcraft" clearly enough, which complicates the judges' task (Afrik.com 26 Aug. 2004). An article in the *Cameroon Tribune* reports that Mounyol Mboussi, [translation] "president of the court of first instance of Vina in Ngaoundere," supports an overhaul of Cameroonian legislation dealing with witchcraft, which [translation] "does not exist from a legal standpoint" (22 Mar. 2005a).

Afrik.com quotes a representative of the justice minister, who stated that there may be 10 to 20 witchcraft trials per month in some regions (26 Aug. 2004). Some people are charged with witchcraft out of vengeance or by [translation] "slander" (Afrik.com 26 Aug. 2004). The judge is ultimately responsible for making the distinction between [translation] "true" and [translation] "false" witches (ibid.). The judge relies largely on testimonies (ibid.). Often, the [translation] "witch" is already considered guilty by the community or village from where the charges stem (ibid.).

Another *Cameroon Tribune* article describes Mathurin Ntual Ntual as a [translation] "witch hunter," whose expertise is mostly used by the courts in the eastern province (22 Mar. 2005b). He claims to be able to detect malevolent instruments by using a rod (*Cameroon Tribune* 22 Mar. 2005b).

Country Reports 2004 states that the authorities' delayed reaction is one cause of the acts of summary justice which have been committed in certain areas and which have led to the serious injury or death of some people accused of witchcraft (28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 1.a.).

Cases of witchcraft

In April 2004, a student killed her mother while trying to extract a litre of blood at the request of a witch she had consulted to help her pass an exam she had failed four times (AFP 10 Apr. 2004). AFP also states that this type of practice [translation] "has become commonplace" in Cameroon (ibid.).

The daily *Le Messager* reports that many believed that witchcraft caused eight deaths when lightning struck a school in the city of Kumba (16 June 2004). The lack of physical damage to the building would have contributed to that explanation (*Le Messager* 16 June 2004).

In April 2002, the government banned the Ma'alah, "a nontraditional religious body," following the death of a six-year old girl whose mother and other members of the religious group had beaten to death to "extract the devil" (*International Religious Freedom Report 2004* 15 Sept. 2004). Witchcraft is sometimes identified as the cause of diseases of unknown origin (*Country Reports 2004* 28 Feb. 2005, Sec. 2.c.).

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

Agence France-Presse (AFP). 10 April 2004. "Sorcellerie: une Camerounaise tue sa mère pour réussir un examen." (Dialog)

Afrik.com. 26 August 2004. Habibou Bangré. "Cameroun: la sorcellerie devant la justice." <<http://www.afrik.com/article7585.html>> [Accessed 10 May 2005]

Cameroon Tribune [Yaoundé]. 22 March 2005a. "Quand la sorcellerie passe à la

barre." (Dialog/AllAfrica.com)

_____. 22 March 2005b. "Profession: traqueur de sorciers."
<<http://www.cameroon-tribune.net/article.php?lang=Fr&oled=j10052005&idart=23987&olarch=j22032005&ph=y#>> [Accessed 12 May 2005]

_____. 18 March 2005. Armand Essogo. "Comment juger les sorciers au tribunal: un colloque international se tient autour de ce thème, au campus de l'UCAC."
<<http://www.cameroon-tribune.net/article.php?lang=Fr&oled=j10052005&idart=23893&olarch=j18032005>> [Accessed 12 May 2005]

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004. 28 February 2005. "Cameroon." United States Department of State: Washington, D.C.
<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41592.htm>> [Accessed 12 May 2005]

International Religious Freedom Report 2004. 15 September 2004. "Cameroon." United States Department of State: Washington, D.C.
<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35343.htm>> [Accessed 12 May 2005]

Le Messager [Yaoundé]. 16 June 2004. Frédéric Boungou. "Drame à Kumba: Une tornade sème la mort parmi les élèves."
<http://www.lemessager.net/details_articles.php?numero=4&code=2&code_art=288#> [Accessed 12 May 2005]

Xe.com. 13 May 2005. "Universal Currency Converter."
<<http://www.xe.com/ucc/convert.cgi>> [Accessed 13 May 2005]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: A professor at the Université Yaoundé I did not respond to a request for information within the time constraints.

Internet sites, including: AFP, *Afrique-Express*, Afrol News, AllAfrica.com, Amnesty International, *Cameroon-Info*, Centre culturel français de Douala, WNC.

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.