

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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Responses to Information Requests

Responses to Information Requests (RIR) respond to focused Requests for Information that are submitted to the Research Directorate in the course of the refugee protection determination process. The database contains a seven-year archive of English and French RIRs. Earlier RIRs may be found on the UNHCR's [Refworld](#) website.

11 April 2014

CMR104811.E

Cameroon: information on fraudulent identity documents, including national identity cards (2007-March 2014)
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

The *Cameroon Tribune* reported in January 2012 that the general assembly of the National Chamber of Notaries of Cameroon condemned the prevalence of fake identity cards in the country (15 Jan. 2012).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Nico Halle Law Firm, a general-practice law firm founded in 1986 and based in Douala, Cameroon, explained that

[i]dentity card fraud is commonplace in Cameroon. Those who are engaged in illegal practices are always in possession of more than one NIC [national identity card]. This is possible as the biometric system in Cameroon is not very effective, taking into consideration the fact that such technology in Cameroon is still backward. Some of these NICs are forged by highly skilled professional forgers for purposes of crime. (19 Mar. 2014)

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Abeng Law Firm, a Douala-based law firm specializing in trade and investment law (n.d.), also indicated that identity document fraud is common (19 Mar. 2014). In contrast to the above, however, the representative of the Abeng law firm expressed his opinion that the prevalence of ID fraud "is due more to the relatively corrupt nature of ... society than [to] the ID process itself" (Abeng Law Firm 19 Mar. 2014). The representative also noted that the authorities are becoming increasingly "stringent and effective in identifying cases of fraud and double identity" (ibid.).

A representative of Muna, Muna & Associates, a Yaoundé-based general-practice legal firm (n.d.), stated in correspondence with the Research Directorate that identity fraud was common before identity cards were digitized, but that, with the advent of computerized national ID cards, cases of double identity and fraudulent cards "can easily be identified" (21 Mar. 2014).

Various sources report cases of fraudulent national identity cards or authentic cards obtained through fraudulent means:

- The *Cameroon Tribune* reports that, in April 2011, an 85-year-old woman was discovered to have been receiving the pension of a deceased relative for 11 years, using the national identity card of the relative's wife (*Cameroon Tribune* 3 Apr. 2011). The woman had reportedly also successfully renewed this identity card and had not been apprehended until another family member reported her (ibid.).
- In a November 2012 article on cross-continent migrants in Africa, *Le Monde diplomatique* recounts that a Ghanaian national who arrived in Douala by sea obtained a false identity card by bribing a Cameroonian police officer (1 Nov. 2012).
- The Institute for Security Studies (ISS), a South Africa-based organization that "aims to enhance human security on the continent" through research, policy advice and practical training (n.d.), reports that the Islamist militant organization Boko Haram "is believed to have established a comfortable berth in northern Cameroon, using porous borders, false identity cards and kinship ties to infiltrate the country" from Nigeria (18 Dec. 2013).

Corroboration for the above information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Several sources mention fraud of other identity documents:

- In February 2011, the Voice of America (VOA) reported that hundreds, "possibly thousands," of unemployed youth in Cameroon used forged identification and business-authorization documents to arrange fake business deals online that target Europeans and Americans (9 Feb. 2011).
- The US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013* states that citizens who are unable to obtain legal identity documents "often turned to a thriving industry for fabricated birth certificates, as birth certificates were required to register children for school or obtain a national identification card" (US 27 Feb. 2014, 25).
- In August 2013, the *Cameroon Tribune* reported that the Ministry of Transportation was cracking down on fraudulent driver's licenses (*Cameroon Tribune* 28 Aug. 2013). The article indicates that the ministry planned to phase out paper licenses and replace them with digitized licenses by March 2014 (ibid.). Similarly, the Cameroonian newspaper *L'Effort Camerounais* made reference in a February 2014 article to what it called a [translation] "plague of fake licenses," indicating that digitized licenses had been introduced in 2009 (21 Feb. 2014).

Corroboration for the above information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

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.

References

Abeng Law Firm. 19 March 2014. Correspondence sent to the Research Directorate by a representative.

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United States (US). 27 February 2014. Department of State. "Cameroon." *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013*. <www.state.gov/documents/organization/220302.pdf> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2014]

Voice of America (VOA). 9 February 2011. "Cameroon Urged to Act Against Cybercrime." <www.voanews.com/content/cameroon-internet-scamming-10feb11-115732229/159740.html> [Accessed 12 Mar. 2014]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: The High Commission of Cameroon in Ottawa did not provide information within the time constraints of this Response. Attempts to contact the Embassy of Cameroon in Washington, DC, were unsuccessful.

Internet sites, including: Australia – Refugee Review Tribunal; Avocats sans frontières-Cameroun; Cameroon – Portail du gouvernement, Présidence de la République, Embassy of Cameroon in Washington, DC, High Commission of Cameroon in Ottawa; Camerounradio.com; ecoi.net; Interpol; *Le Jour*; *Journal du Cameroun*; *Le Messenger*; Stratfor; United Nations – Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Refworld.

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