
CAMEROON

Republic of Cameroon

Population: 15.7 million (7.8 million under 18)

Government armed forces: 23,100 (estimate)

Compulsory recruitment age: no conscription

Voluntary recruitment age: 18; under 18 with parental consent

Voting age: 20

Optional Protocol: signed 5 October 2001

Other treaties ratified (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP I and II, ILO 138, ILO 182; ACRWC

There were no reports of under-18s in government armed forces, although under-18s could volunteer with parental consent.

Context

Political activity by opposition parties and repression by government and security officials increased in the run-up to presidential elections scheduled for October 2004. As in the legislative elections in 2002, the authorities banned opposition meetings and detained government critics, including political activists and journalists.¹ The security forces were accused of arbitrary arrests, torture and the use of lethal force against demonstrators.²

Civil society groups continued to express concern that the exploitation of oil, which is to be piped through Cameroon from southern Chad, would have a negative impact on social, cultural and economic rights and destroy rural livelihoods.³

Government

National recruitment legislation and practice

Presidential Decree No. 94/185 (September 1994), concerning non-officer military personnel, sets the minimum recruitment age at 18 and the maximum at 22 (Article 11). Recruitment is on a voluntary basis.⁴ In April 2001 Cameroon reported to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that there was no conscription in Cameroon. The government also stated that no child under the age of 18 may be recruited into the armed forces, gendarmerie or police force except with parental consent.⁵ No information was available on the numbers of recruits under the age of 18 in the armed forces.

Military training and military schools

The *Ecole Militaire Inter-Armes* in the capital, Yaoundé, is a military school for officers with a

minimum recruitment age of 18. Applicants under the age of 21 must have parental authorization.⁶

Other developments

In November 2001 the Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about a number of children's rights issues, including the lack of safeguards to protect children from forced labour, particularly in the Pygmy and Kirdi communities, and child trafficking across borders. Among its concerns was the high level of unregistered births.⁷ The lack of a functional registration system raises the risk of underage recruitment into the armed forces.

1 *Amnesty International Report 2004*, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/engindex>.

2 Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'Homme (FIDH), *Un premier octobre de tous les dangers au Cameroun anglophone : comme d'habitude?*, September 2003, <http://www.fidh.org>.

3 *Amnesty International Report 2004*, Chad.

4 B. Horeman and M. Stolwijk, *Refusing to Bear Arms: A World Survey of Conscription and Conscientious Objection to Military Service*, War Resisters International, London, 1998, <http://www.wri-irg.org/co/rtba>.

5 Initial report of Cameroon to UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. CRC/C/28/Add.16, 4 April 2001, <http://www.ohchr.org>.

6 Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence, press communiqué, 12 May 1997.

7 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations: Cameroon, UN Doc. CRC/C/15/Add.164, 6 November 2001.