CAMEROON 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Cameroon is a republic dominated by a strong presidency. The president retains power over the legislative and judicial branches of government. The ruling political party, the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement, has remained in power since its creation in 1985. The country held legislative elections in February 2020 that were marked by irregularities. The ruling party won 152 of 180 National Assembly seats. Paul Biya has served as president since 1982. He was last reelected in 2018 in an election observers described as marked by irregularities.

The national police and the national gendarmerie are responsible for internal security. The national police report to the General Delegation of National Security and the national gendarmerie reports to the Secretariat of State for Defense in charge of the Gendarmerie. The army shares some domestic security responsibilities; it reports to the minister delegate at the presidency in charge of defense. The Rapid Intervention Battalion reports directly to the president. Civilian and military authorities at times did not maintain effective control over the security forces. There were credible reports that members of the security forces committed some abuses.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings; enforced disappearances; torture and other ill-treatment by the government and nonstate armed groups; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrests or detention; political prisoners or detainees; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; punishment of family members for offenses allegedly committed by an individual; serious abuses in a conflict, including abductions and physical abuse, by nonstate armed groups; serious restrictions on freedom of expression, including violence, threats of violence, or unjustified detentions of journalists and censorship; substantial interference with the right of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; serious restrictions on freedom of movement; inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections; serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation;

serious government corruption; lack of investigations and accountability for gender-based violence; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of ethnic groups, including the Massaga and Oliti communities in the Southwest Region and herders and farmers in the Northwest Region; trafficking in persons; crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons; and the existence or use of laws criminalizing same-sex sexual conduct between adults.

Although the government took steps to identify, investigate, prosecute, and punish officials who committed human rights abuses or corruption, it did not do so systematically and rarely made public the outcome of such procedures. Impunity remained a serious problem.

Armed separatists, Boko Haram, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-West Africa, and criminal gangs also committed significant human rights abuses, some of which were investigated by the government.