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HUMAN RIGHTS  
PROGRAM

# Cameroon

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Country Report for use in refugee claims based on persecution relating to sexual orientation and gender identity

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This document was prepared by law students and highlights information about publicly-accessible country conditions available at the time it was prepared. It is not exhaustive, nor is it updated on a regular basis. The information provided here is not a substitute for legal advice or legal assistance, and the International Human Rights program at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Law cannot provide such advice or assistance.

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## I. Introduction

- Homophobia is pervasive in Cameroonian society, and is incited by religious organizations, state agents, and newspapers.
- Same-sex sexual relations are illegal under Article 347 of the Penal Code of Cameroon, carrying a penalty of 6 months to 5 years in jail and a fine.
- Although some sources suggest that homosexuality is an "open secret" and that the anti-homosexual provision is not widely enforced, there are dozens of recorded cases in recent years of young men and women arrested, detained and/or sentenced to jail on the basis of suspicions of homosexuality.
- A prominent Cameroon lawyer who defends allegedly homosexual clients notes that, although article 347 requires the parties to be caught in the act, the police arrest on suspicions of homosexuality alone and the courts uphold those arrests.
- Criminal procedure is often violated in the case of persons arrested on suspicion of homosexuality. The investigation and trial process is dragged out beyond the durations allowed by law to punish the accused illegally.
- Men arrested on suspicion of homosexuality are often subjected to anal examinations.
- Alleged homosexuals suffer physical and sexual abuse in jail at the hands of other inmates and are at risk for contracting HIV.
- The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) brought concerns about the detention of 11 men on allegations of homosexuality to the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice. The Ministers replied that the men's continued detention protected positive African cultural values, which did not include homosexuality.
- A 2005 IRB report suggests that homosexuals are "tolerated" in urban areas, some of which have homosexual communities, clubs and bars, but forced out of rural communities. The vast majority of arrests and prison sentences recorded by other sources, however, occurred in the capital, Yaounde, and the largest city, Douala.
- In a Christmas 2005 sermon, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Cameroon publicly denounced homosexuality and suggested that highly-placed homosexuals force others into homosexual relations in exchange for jobs. The sermon incited a

media frenzy in which newspapers printed lists of names of public figures who were allegedly homosexual. These newspaper editions were very popular and required additional print runs. Hundreds of anti-gay protesters turned up at an ensuing defamation trial.

- Dozens of young women have been expelled from schools on accusations of homosexuality.
- Traditional Cameroonian beliefs include that homosexuals are bewitched or cursed.

## **II. Case Law**

Unfortunately, we have found no cases of claimants from Cameroon claiming refugee status on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Our search included the Quicklaw Immigration Tribunal database, as well as all Federal Court and Federal Court of Appeal cases. A wide variety of French and English search terms were used.

## **III. Anti-Homosexual Legislation**

### **(i) Article 347**

1. *Penal Code* Art. 347 (Loi no. 65-LF-24 du 12 novembre 1965 et loi no. 67-LF-1 du 12 juin 1967)

- Article 347 Penal Code criminalizes sexual contacts with members of the same sex with a penalty of 6 months to 5 years imprisonment and a fine of up to CFA 200.000.
- If one of the persons involved is between 16 and 21 the penalty is doubled.

### **(ii) Extent of enforcement of Article 347**

1. Human Rights Watch, *Letter to the Minister of Justice of Cameroon Regarding 11 Men Detained on Suspicion of Homosexual Activity*, (30 November 2005) online: <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2005/11/30/letter-minister-justice-cameroon-regarding-11-men-detained-suspicion-homosexual-acti>

- In May 2005, police arrested 11 men from the Nlongka Brigade in Yaounde.
- The men were socializing at a nightclub that was raided.
- They were arrested on suspicion of sodomy in violation of Section 347 of the Cameroonian Penal Code.

2. Staff writer, "Africans jailed for gay sex," *PinkNews* (28 February 2006), online: <http://www.pinknews.org/news/articles/2005-628.html/>

- In February 2006, a court in Cameroon jailed two men for a year after they

confessed to having gay sex.

3. Staff writer, "Jail term for Cameroon gay libel" *BBC News* (3 March 2006), online: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4772244.stm>.

- BBC correspondent says it is an open secret that homosexuality is alive in the country and that the law banning homosexual acts (Article 347) is rarely used.

4. Staff writer, "Cameroon: Gay Man Imprisoned for Two Years Without Trial" *rodonline*, (2 March 2007)

online:[http://rodonline.typepad.com/rodonline/2007/03/cameroon\\_gay\\_ma.html](http://rodonline.typepad.com/rodonline/2007/03/cameroon_gay_ma.html)

- In March 2007 a gay man was released after being imprisoned for 2 years without a trial.
- He was arrested on charges of homosexuality when he was 22 years old.
- Human rights lawyers learned about his case and notified the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission in New York City.
- The Senior Specialist for Africa at the IGLHC said there could be thousands of gay men like this man in prisons throughout Africa. "He could have spent the rest of his life in prison. He was lost in the system"

5. Amnesty International, *Cameroon: Persecution based on actual or imputed sexual orientation*, online:

[http://www.amnesty.nl/documenten/schrijfnetworken/0409\\_mailing\\_LGBT\\_achtergr.rtf](http://www.amnesty.nl/documenten/schrijfnetworken/0409_mailing_LGBT_achtergr.rtf).

- In July 2007, members of the Cameroonian police from Bonaberi police station in Douala arrested six men accused of engaging in same-sex sexual relations.
- They were placed under preventive detention for 5 days on the orders of the Public Prosecutor (*Mandat du Procureur de la République*).
- The men were not informed of the reason for their arrest and detention.
- Four of the six men were also accused of committing sodomy and corrupting youth. One of them was also accused of committing an indecent act (*outrage à la pudeur*) with a 16-year-old male minor.
- According to the police and the prosecutor, they violated provisions of sections 344, 346 and 347 of the Cameroonian Penal code (relating to the corruption and indecent exposure of minors under the age of 16).
- On April 14 2008, proceedings were stopped against the six men on the grounds that the police who arrested them had acted outside their jurisdiction.

6. Associated Press, "Cameroon sentences 3 to hard labor for homosexuality" *USA Today* (16 January 2008) online: [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-01-16-cameroon\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-01-16-cameroon_N.htm)

- In January 2008, three men were convicted of homosexuality and were sentenced to six months' hard labour.
- They were arrested in August and spent 6 months in detention before their trial.

#### IV. Government Reports

1. U.S. Department of State, *2008 Human Rights Report: Cameroon* (25 February 2009), online: <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/af/118990.htm>>.

- **Homosexual activity in Cameroon is illegal; punishable by prison sentence/fine**
- **LGBT harassed by law enforcement officials**
- **Three homosexuals sentenced to six months in prison and \$100 US fine**

Homosexual activity is illegal and punishable by a prison sentence of six months to five years and a fine ranging from 20,000 to 200,000 CFA (\$40 to \$400). Individuals incarcerated for homosexual acts suffered discrimination and violence from other inmates. Homosexuals suffered from harassment and extortion by law enforcement officials. Three homosexuals arrested in August 2007 were sentenced to six months in jail and fines of 50,000 CFA (\$100) for homosexuality on January 9, 2008.

2. U.S. Department of State, *2007 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon* (March 11, 2008), online: <[www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100470.htm](http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100470.htm)>.

- **Six men were being held in prison on charges of homosexuality.**

Three young homosexuals were arrested in August 2007. The Bonanjo High Court refused to release six Douala men held in prison on charges of homosexuality; the Douala High Court formally charged them with homosexuality and the trial was pending. In June 2006, a private high school in Douala expelled 34 students, 12 of them women, on allegations of homosexuality. In connection with this incident, one female student, one woman living near the school, and two former schoolmates were arrested; the Douala First Instance Court released them on a suspended three-year prison term.

3. U.S. Department of State, *2006 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon* (March 6, 2007), online:

<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2006/78723.htm>>.

- **Police were widely viewed as corrupt, leading to arbitrary detentions and to mob justice.**
- **Private disputes often resulted in one party making allegations of homosexuality about the other and involving the security forces.**
- **Police briefly arrested Alice Nkom, a prominent lawyer defending homosexual clients.**
- **12 of 17 men arrested in 2005 for homosexuality were found guilty of sodomy and sentenced to 10 months in jail.**
- **A private high school expelled 34 students, 12 of them women, on allegations**

**of homosexuality. Four women were arrested and sentenced to three years suspended jail term in connection with this incident.**

Excerpt on state protection:

"Citizens viewed police as ineffective, which frequently resulted in mob "justice" .... It was widely believed that individuals paid bribes to law enforcement and the judiciary to secure their freedom. Police officers and members of the gendarmerie were widely viewed as corrupt officials who frequently and arbitrarily arrested and detained citizens. Police demanded bribes at checkpoints, and influential citizens reportedly paid police to make arrests or abuse individuals involved in personal disputes. Private disputes, such as feuds between business partners, frequently resulted in one party making allegations of impropriety or homosexuality about the other and involving the security forces."

In April 2006, police arrested and briefly detained Alice Nkom, a prominent lawyer who was visiting alleged homosexual clients in jail. In March, a Yaounde court sentenced a newspaper publisher to four months in jail for defamation: the publisher had printed a list of alleged homosexuals and had been unable to substantiate his claim that one of them, a government member, was homosexual. 17 men were arrested in May 2005 as suspected homosexuals. Five had been released soon after for lack of evidence; the rest were found guilty of sodomy in June 2006, sentenced to 10 months in jail, and subsequently released for time served.

4. U.S. Department of State, *2005 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cameroon* (March 8, 2006), online:  
<<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61558.htm>>.

- **Twelve men incarcerated on allegations of homosexuality were to be subjected to a "medical examination" to determine whether they had engaged in homosexual acts.**
- **There were organisations that advocated for homosexual rights.**

This source repeats much of the information in source (3). According to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, the government had ordered a "medical examination" of the twelve men held in jail following their May 2005 arrest, in order to determine if they had engaged in homosexual conduct.

5. UN Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, *Cameroon* (24 November 2008), online:  
<[http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session4/CM/A\\_HRC\\_WG6\\_4\\_CM\\_3\\_E.PDF](http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session4/CM/A_HRC_WG6_4_CM_3_E.PDF)>

- **Homosexuality continues to be criminalised and punishable by prison sentence**
- **Suspected homosexuals are reported arrested on “an alarming basis”**

This document reiterated the report of the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative that homosexuality continues to be punishable by law with a prison sentence of up to five years and that arrests of suspected homosexuals are reported on an alarmingly regular basis.

7. Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Cameroon: Current treatment of homosexuals* (7 April 2005), online:

< <http://www2.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=417596>>.

- **Homosexuality is illegal and punishable by prison sentence or fine**
- **Homosexuals in rural areas are likely to be expelled from their community**
- **Homosexuals avoid societal hostility by having a “pretend partner”**
- **European Union Heads of Mission on a 2004 fact-finding mission to Cameroon determined that claims for asylum based on homosexuality were ill-founded.**

This is an amalgamation of sources. It notes that many sources report that homosexuality is illegal in Cameroon. Notes a 2004 UK report, based on a fact-finding mission to Cameroon. It found that homosexuals are tolerated in urban areas, some of which have established male homosexual communities with bars and clubs. In rural communities, however, "homosexuality is regarded as abhorrent, and anyone who is discovered to be homosexual is likely to be expelled from his/her community". The report states that the consensus reached between the various European Union Heads of Mission was that claims for asylum based on homosexuality are ill-founded. Notes a master's thesis at the University of Yaoundé which showed that gays and lesbians, “camouflage their true sexual activities” to avoid "social reprobation" and the "hostility" of Cameroonian society toward homosexuals. One such technique was having a pretend partner of the opposite sex for public purposes. A British NGO recorded one such case in which the pretend wife was well-aware of her husband's homosexual relationship.

8. International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission, "United Nations: Group Finds Detention of Men in Cameroon on The Basis of Sexual Orientation to be a Violation of Human Rights" (October 11, 2006), online :

- **The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention declared that detention of 11 men in Cameroon on the basis of their alleged sexual orientation constituted an arbitrary deprivation of liberty contrary to the ICCPR.**
- **The Working Group called upon the government for remedy, including a possible repeal of the law criminalizing homosexuality.**

Eleven men were arrested at a bar frequented by gays and lesbians in Yaounde. They

were detained for more than one year. While in jail, they faced harsh conditions and homophobic attacks from other prisoners. Nine of them men were found guilty of sodomy in June 2006 and sentenced to 10-month jail terms. One of the men, Alim Mongoche, died of AIDS-related complications shortly after conviction, exacerbated by the harsh conditions of detention. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) and the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) brought the complaint to the UN Working Group on behalf of these men. This decision by the Working Group marks one of only two occasions that this particular UN human rights body has publicly issued an opinion impugning detentions based on anti-homosexuality laws.

The article also notes that four women were convicted of sodomy in June 2006, sentenced to 3 years probation and threatened with 6 months imprisonment “if they continue their lesbianism.” At least four other men were still detained in Kondengui Central Prison because of their homosexuality, some without formal charge or trial.

## V. NGO Reports

1. Amnesty International, *Cameroon: Impunity underpins persistent abuse* (29 January, 2009), online: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR17/001/2009/en>, pp. 24-29 [accessed March 3, 2010]

- **Homophobia is pervasive in Cameroon. It is endemic in the population and incited by newspapers, religious organisations, youth organisations, and state agents.**
- **Several dozen young men and women have been arrested, detained and/or sentenced to prison terms and fines over the past three years for allegedly engaging in consensual homosexual relations.**
- **Detainees are sometimes subjected to anal examinations.**
- **The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice have stated that it is the prerogative of the state to arrest homosexuals to protect public morality.**

This report reviews many of the incidents of arrest, detention and criminal prosecution referred to by other sources with great detail and organisation to document systematic abuses of LGBT human rights by the state.

2. Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2009 - Cameroon*, (28 May, 2009), online: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a1fadf90.html> [accessed 3 March 2010]

Please find below a relevant excerpt:

### Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people

The Penal Code criminalizes same-sex sexual relations. Homophobia is



endemic in Cameroonian society and prosecutions of suspected gay men leading to imprisonment continued on a regular basis.

- Two men were convicted in March of same-sex acts and sentenced to six months' imprisonment and a fine. They were released because they had already spent more than six months in custody. The detainees had been subjected to humiliating anal examinations.
- In May, police in Lomié, Eastern Province, arrested two young women on suspicion of same-sex acts. While in custody, the police reportedly forced the two women to denounce four others as their "accomplices".

3. Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2008 - Cameroon*, online : <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/cameroon/report-2008> [accessed 3 March 2010]

Please find below a relevant excerpt:

Discrimination – detentions for ‘practising homosexuality’

Six men accused of “practising homosexuality” were arrested in July in Douala. In August, a further two men were arrested in Douala and three others in Yaoundé for the same offence. All 11 men continued to be held awaiting trial at the end of the year.

One man who had reportedly been detained for more than two years without trial on charges of “practising homosexuality” was released in February. The High Court in Yaoundé ruled that the state had failed to produce any evidence relevant to the charge.

4. Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Report 2007 - Cameroon*, online: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/cameroon/report-2007> [accessed 3 March 2010]

Convicted for practising homosexuality

Patrick Yousse-Djaudio and another gay man were reportedly sentenced in February to one year's imprisonment for practising homosexuality. In March, four young women were arrested for allegedly engaging in lesbian activities. They were released in June after a court in Douala sentenced them to a three-year suspended prison sentence and a fine.

Two minors arrested in May 2005 with nine others accused of practising homosexuality were released in February without trial. The remaining nine were tried in June. Two were acquitted and seven were sentenced to 10 months' imprisonment then released because of the time already spent in

custody. One of these, Alim Mongoche, died of an illness soon after his release.

Twelve young women students were expelled in March from a college on account of being lesbian. They were not able to join any other college.

## VI: Media Reports

1. AlertNet, "Crackdowns on gays make the closet safer", (19 January 2010), online: <<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/ad48dc979c5a86ba075f27cea56c9d4f.htm>>.

- In January 2008, a Cameroonian court sentenced three men accused of homosexuality to six months' hard labour.
- Gay men are routinely imprisoned.

2. Christi van der Westhuizen, "Fighting to free those found 'guilty of homosexuality'", *allAfrica* (5 August 2009), online: <<http://allafrica.com/stories/200908060487.html>>.

- **Interview with Alice Nkom, a barrister of the Cameroonian Bar who defends homosexual clients**
- **A homophobic Christmas 2005 sermon by the archbishop of Yaounde spurred on a media frenzy against LGBT persons, including "outing" of lists of allegedly gay individuals.**
- **Criminal procedure is often violated in LGBT persons' cases.**
- **Cameroonians are often arrested on suspicion of homosexuality, although the penal code requires that they be caught in the act. Judges never respond to this defence argument.**

Alice Nkom discusses her work defending young persons accused of homosexual relations, and some of the abuses perpetrated against homosexuals in Cameroon. She notes the Christmas 2005 sermon by the archbishop of Yaounde regarding LGBT people, in which he said that high-profile people who were homosexuals forced other Cameroonians into same-sex activities in return for jobs. The Christmas sermon caused a "witch hunt with LGBT people accused of being the root cause of all social ills, the root of unemployment and corruption, in Cameroon." The Christmas sermon launched "a media frenzy"; journalists published lists of names of people who were supposedly gay.

There are widespread reports of extortion; at "any given time" young people can be subjected to arrest or blackmail even where law does not authorize police to do so. Criminal procedure code is continuously violated in gay and lesbian peoples' cases. Alleged homosexuals are often arrested on mere suspicion, while the penal code requires

being caught in the act; judges never respond to this concern. Convictions are entered against alleged homosexuals without sufficient evidence. Some accused homosexuals are sent for forensic anal tests.

In 2006, the principal of a private high school expelled 12 students after being told that a student had said to the other, “whatever she did, she would belong to her”; the student was arrested. A grandmother of one of the students involved accused another girl of misleading her granddaughter, resulting in the arrest of the granddaughter, her friend, and two other girls mentioned during the discussions. All four were under 18 and received sentences of three months each.

3. Abeli Zahabu, “Libération de 6 détenus accusés d’homosexualité”, *Behind the Mask* (28 March 2008), online: <<http://www.mask.org.za/article.php?cat=cameroon&id=1841>>.

- **French language article**
- **Five Cameroonians and one Nigerian were released after spending six months in detainment on accusations of homosexuality, corruption and intercourse with a minor.**
- **Homosexuals in Cameroon live in fear and suspicion due to Article 347 of the Penal Code that criminalizes homosexuality.**

4. Pink News, “Cameroon men get six months jail for being gay”, (16 January 2008), online: < <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/news/articles/2005-6579.html/>>.

- **Criminal procedure is often violated in LGBT persons' cases.**
- **Alleged homosexuals are often subjected to needlessly long trials and detentions to punish them unofficially.**

After a random arrest in search of armed robbers, one of the men whom the police subsequently beat, confessed to being homosexual and implicated two of his colleagues. The article cited International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Campaign Program Associate Joel Nana, who says that “as soon as the shadow of homosexuality enters into a case, due process goes out of the window”. People detained on grounds of homosexuality all have cases riddled with irregularities and have been subject to procedures that are inconsistent with the code of penal procedure. Alleged homosexuals are detained for investigation for longer time periods than the law prescribes. According to Sebastien Mandeng at Alternatives-Cameroon, the courts needlessly prolong the court process with no legal justification in order to unofficially punish and imprison the accused. Dozens of girls and young women have been expelled from schools as a result of real or perceived sexual orientation. In last two years (at time of publishing), more than 30 people had been arrested on charges of homosexuality.

5. Rex Wockner, “International News”, *PrideSource* (6 September 2007), online: < <http://www.pridesource.com/article.html?article=26863>>.

- **Six men jailed in Cameroon after one man was arrested on theft charges and**

**coerced into naming his gay friends.**

- **Cary Alan Johnson of International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission terms the Cameroonian government's tactics as a "witch hunt."**
- **More than 20 people detained the past two years (since date of publishing) under the anti-gay Article 347 of the Cameroonian penal code.**

6. African Veil, "Cameroon court frees gay man after 2 years in prison without trial", (2 March 2007), online: <<http://www.africanveil.org/cameroon015.htm>>.

- **Gay man, arrested on charges of homosexuality at the age of 22, was released from prison after being held for two years and without ever having a trial.**
- **The accused's situation was discovered by human rights attorney Alice Nkom.**
- **A human rights attorney was hired to represent the accused in a habeas corpus hearing.**
- **At hearing, the judge ordered release after finding that the government had no evidence in the case; there were no files on the arrest and the government had no evidence to present.**

7. Joel Nana, "Yaounde 11 man re-arrested", *Behind the Mask* (18 January 2007), online: <<http://www.mask.org.za/article.php?cat=cameroon&id=1437>>.

- **One of the 11 men arrested in 2006 was re-arrested for allegedly raping the mentally ill son of his employer.**
- **The accused, Francois Ayissi, claims that there is no evidence, and that his detainment is evidence of the vulnerability of homosexual people in Cameroon especially if their sexual orientation has been exposed.**
- **The article claims that the arrest is illegal under Cameroon's new Penal Code as a person cannot be held in custody more than 72 hours without evidence.**

8. PlusNews, "Imprisoned homosexuals face high HIV risk", (5 October 2006), online: <<http://www.asylumlaw.org/docs/sexualminorities/CameroonHIV100506.pdf>>.

- **Homosexual prisoners are at risk for contracting HIV from sexual assault in jails.**

A man, Alim, died from AIDS-related illness ten days after completing a one-year prison sentence for homosexuality. He was allegedly raped and abused during his imprisonment. Another man, Lambert, who had been arrested and convicted with Alim, confirmed that some of the men had been assaulted and raped in their cells. Lawyer Alice Nkom says that Alim was raped at least twice during his detention. Another of Nkom's clients, a 17-year old, was also raped several times while in prison; a few days before his release, a violent attack by other detainees left him in a coma for two days. Lambert states, "as homosexuals, we were the first in line for sexual abuse of prisoners".

9. Afrol News, “Cameroon refuses to release acquitted homosexuals”, (3 May 2006), online: <<http://www.afrol.com/articles/19065>>.

- **Despite the acquittal by a trial judge of 9 men jailed on charges of homosexuality, the prosecutor’s office has refused to release them**
- **Acquittal was ordered as no witnesses were called and no proof offered by the prosecution, according to the IGLHRC**
- **The government has stated that the men will be re-tried**
- **The accused men have been detained for almost one year**
- **IGLHRC criticizes the government’s actions as an abuse of power and a major violation of due process**

10. Joe Dinga Pefok, “11 students dismissed for lesbianism”, *The Post* (28 March 2006), online: <<http://www.asylumlaw.org/docs/sexualminorities/Cameroon032806.pdf>>.

- **11 female students dismissed from the College Eyegue Nkongo at Deido Douala after confessing to belonging to a network of lesbians**
- **Dismissal occurred as a result of a proposal by the Parents/Teachers Association that the students be dismissed to prevent other students from contamination – the proposal received the majority approval of parents**

11. Behind the Mask, “Public homophobia increases on the eve of sodomy trial”, (2 March 2006), online: <<http://www.mask.org.za/article.php?cat=cameroon&id=864>>.

- **Another report of the arrest of 11 men on sodomy charges.**
- **Two other men were sentenced to a year in jail for a consensual homosexual encounter.**
- **The Minister of Justice responded to concerns by a human rights organisation by stating that continued detention ensured preservation of positive African cultural values, which exclude homosexuality.**

This is another account of the arrest and detention of 11 gay men. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) claims that the men have been unfairly detained. In a separate case in the previous week, two other men were sentenced to a year in prison for a consensual homosexual encounter. The executive director of the IGLHRC says that “the troublesome news is that a climate of public homophobia has emerged in Cameroon that causes great concern about the fate of the remaining detainees. Upon writing to the Cameroonian Minister of Justice for the release of the 11 men, the IGLHRC received a response that continued detention ensured “that positive African cultural values are preserved”, and that “homosexuality is not a value accepted in the Cameroonian society”.

12. The Age, “Cameroon jails men for gay sex”, (28 February 2006), online: <

<http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/cameroon-jails-men-for-gay-sex/2006/02/28/1141020050990.html>>.

- **Two men jailed for a sentence of one year after confessing to having gay sex**
- **Same-sex relationships are often publicly condemned as “un-African”**
- **Some traditional beliefs hold that homosexuals are “cursed or bewitched”**
- **Cameroon newspapers published lists and photos in January 2006 of allegedly gay politicians, businessmen, and musicians in a “crusade against ‘deviant behaviour’”**

13. BBC News, “Row over Cameroon ‘gay’ witchhunt”, (6 February 2006), online: <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4685298.stm> >.

- **Tabloid newspapers printed lists of names of prominent political and business figures who were allegedly homosexual.**

Tabloid newspapers have campaigned to “out” prominent political and business elites as homosexual; some 50 people were named. Cameroon is a conservative society where homosexuality is frowned upon. According to BBC’s source in Yaounde, it is an “open secret” that homosexuality is alive and the anti-gay laws are rarely used. The newspaper campaign was so popular that one newspaper had to have extra print runs. The publisher of L’Anecdote, one of the newspapers involved in the campaign, defended his actions, saying that “gays are among us” and promised more revelations to come. The newspapers also carried a vehement criticism of homosexuality by Archbishop Victor Tonye Bakot who criticized the European Union for its legitimizing homosexuality. Human Rights Watch has condemned the practice of forced anal examinations of those arrested on charges of having gay sex.

14. BBC News, “Jail term for Cameroon gay libel ”, (3 March 2006), online: <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4772244.stm> >.

- **A Cameroon newspaper editor has been sentenced to four months in jail and ordered to pay a fine for defaming a minister by saying he was gay while being unable to prove it.**
- **Hundreds of anti-gay protesters gathered at the court.**
- **"Other newspapers joined in the campaign to "out" homosexuals, which proved very popular..." One newspaper had to have extra print runs.**

15. Andrew Meldrum, “50 public figures named in gay witchhunt by Cameroon’s papers”, *The Guardian* (6 February 2006), online: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2006/feb/06/pressandpublishing.gayrights>>.

- **Cameroon newspapers published names of 50 prominent figures accusing them of homosexuality; editors say they are on a campaign against deviant behaviour.**

In this article, the names included government ministers, news readers, popular singers, and sports stars. The publisher of L'Anecdote, one of the newspapers involved, had this to say: "Men making love to other men ... is filthy. It may be normal in the west, but in African and Cameroon in particular, it is unthinkable... We could not remain silent. We had to ring the alarm bell. We don't regret it and we have to do it again... in spite of numerous death threats that me and my journalists have had." At Christmas 2005, Archbishop Victor Tonye Bakot criticized the European Union for giving legitimacy to homosexuality, and claimed that Cameroonians had resorted to homosexuality in order to advance their careers and earn more money. His arguments were largely repeated by the newspapers. According to some traditional beliefs, homosexual people are cursed or bewitched.