



Home Office

# Country Policy and Information Note

## Cameroon: Sexual orientation and gender identity or expression

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# Preface

## Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in [the basis of claim](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

## Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment on whether, **in general**:

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- A person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- A person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- Claims are likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- If a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers **must**, however, still consider all claims on an individual basis, taking into account each case’s specific facts.

## Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation’s (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI’s relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

The structure and content of the country information section follows a [terms of reference](#) which sets out the general and specific topics relevant to this note.

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the ‘cut-off’ date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion.

Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

- the motivation, purpose, knowledge and experience of the source
- how the information was obtained, including specific methodologies used
- the currency and detail of information, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

Multiple sourcing is used to ensure that the information is accurate, balanced and corroborated, so that a comprehensive and up-to-date picture at the time of publication is provided of the issues relevant to this note.

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

## Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email the [Country Policy and Information Team](#).

## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The [Independent Advisory Group on Country Information](#) (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to support him in reviewing the efficiency, effectiveness and consistency of approach of COI produced by the Home Office.

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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# Assessment

Updated: 19 December 2019

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Basis of claim

1.1.1 Fear of persecution and / or serious harm by state or non-state actors because of the person's actual or perceived sexual orientation and / or gender identity or expression.

### 1.2 Points to note

1.2.1 This note provides an assessment of the general situation for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, trans and intersex persons, as well as those perceived as such. They are referred hereafter collectively as 'LGBTI persons', although the experiences of each group may differ.

1.2.2 For general guidance on considering claims LGBTI persons, decision makers should refer to the Asylum Instructions on [Sexual orientation in asylum claims](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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## 2. Consideration of issues

### 2.1 Credibility

2.1.1 For information on assessing credibility, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

2.1.2 Decision makers must also check if there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview (see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#)).

2.1.3 Decision makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing (see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#)).

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### 2.2 Exclusion

2.2.1 Decision makers must consider whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

2.2.2 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).

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### 2.3 Refugee convention reason

2.3.1 The person's actual or imputed membership of a particular social group (PSG).

2.3.2 LGBTI persons in Cameroon form a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the Refugee Convention because they share an innate

characteristic, or a common background that cannot be changed, or share a characteristic or belief that is so fundamental to identity or conscience (their sexual orientation and / or gender identity or expression) that they should not be forced to renounce it and have a distinct identity which is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.

2.3.3 Although LGBTI persons in Cameroon form a PSG, establishing such membership is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question is whether the particular person will face a real risk or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.

2.3.4 For further guidance on convention reasons, including PSGs, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.4 Risk

### a) General points

2.4.1 Paragraphs 35 and 82 of the determination of the Supreme Court's ruling in [HJ \(Iran\) and HT \(Cameroon\) v Secretary of State for the Home Department \[2010\] UKSC 31, heard 10,11,12 May and promulgated 7 July 2010](#), set out the approach to take and established the test that should be applied when assessing a claim based on a person's sexual orientation and / or gender identity / expression.

2.4.2 For further information, see the Asylum Instructions on [Sexual orientation in asylum claims](#) and [Gender identity and expression, including intersex issues in asylum claims](#).

### b) State treatment of LGBTI persons

2.4.3 While the constitution provides equal rights for all citizens, there is no legal provision for protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Despite the criminal code having been revised in 2016, same-sex sexual relations for both men and women remains illegal and carries a sentence of between 6 months to 5 years and a fine of up to 200,000 Cameroonian francs (CFA). Additionally, a law on cybersecurity and cybercrime criminalises the making of sexual propositions online, with a penalty of between 1 and 2 years' imprisonment and a fine of up to 1,000,000 (CFA). This is doubled if the proposition results in sexual intercourse. The law is, however, silent on the legal status of trans or intersex persons and issues related to intersex people have rarely been addressed officially. Cameroon is reported to prosecute people for consensual same sex relations more aggressively than any other country in the world (see [Legal context](#) and [Treatment of intersex persons](#)).

2.4.4 Some politicians and members of the government, including members of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (CNDHL) have publicly denounced sexual minorities. The CNDHL negates and ignores reports of discrimination against LGBTI persons. LGBTI persons are also generally excluded from political processes and their interests are poorly represented by elected officials (see [Homophobic rhetoric](#) and [Government and political leaders attitude](#)).

- 2.4.5 Sources report that tens of persons who are, or are perceived to be, LGBTI are arrested each year and a smaller number are prosecuted. For example, NGOs reported that in 2016, 33 people were arbitrarily arrested in Yaoundé based on their perceived or actual sexual orientation. Comprehensive statistics on the number and frequency of arrests of LGBTI persons are not available to determine how systematically the law is enforced but NGOs claimed there were 56 cases of arbitrary arrests and 4 cases of imprisonment and criminal convictions in 2018. There also are reports that fair trial standards are not met and that prosecutions are based on suspicion or allegations from strangers. Additionally, some prosecutions may affect male rape victims rather than gay and bisexual men. (see [Legal context](#), [State attitudes and treatment](#), and [Bibliography](#)).
- 2.4.6 In addition to arbitrary arrests there are some reports that the police harass, extort and blackmail LGBTI persons. Those persons who have been arrested and/or detained reported being subjected to ill-treatment, including physical and sexual assault, and being subjected to forced anal examinations. There are also reports that individuals and organisations who support or advocate on behalf of LGBTI activists are often subject to harassment and abuse, including torture and ill-treatment and arrest, although a number of NGO groups continue to operate and provide assistance to LGBTI persons (see [State attitudes and treatment](#), [Government and political leaders attitude](#), [Arrests, prosecutions, detention and state discrimination](#) and [Government recognition of LGBTI NGOs](#)).
- 2.4.7 LGBTI persons suffer discrimination in accessing services such as healthcare, including access to HIV / AIDS treatment and services, and employment (see [Access to services](#) and [Government recognition of LGBTI NGOs](#)).
- 2.4.8 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instructions on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), [Sexual orientation in asylum claims](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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#### c) Societal treatment of LGBTI persons

- 2.4.9 Cameroonians generally hold a negative view of same-sex relations. Homophobic views are widespread and sources indicate that there is strong societal intolerance of and discrimination against LGBTI persons. Anti-LGBTI rhetoric in mainstream media plays on and may magnify existing societal homophobia (see [Societal attitudes and treatment](#) and [LGBTI groups, civil society and human rights NGOs](#)).
- 2.4.10 Religious leaders in Cameroon play a role in perpetuating stigmatization of same-sex relations (see [Religious attitudes/treatment](#)).
- 2.4.11 LGBTI persons and persons suspected or perceived to be LGBTI are reported to have been subjected to threats, violent attacks including murder, discrimination and harassment involving intimidation, blackmail, loss of property and eviction, denial of educational opportunities, loss of employment, and difficulties in accessing health care (see [Government](#)

[recognition of LGBT NGOs](#), [Societal attitudes and treatment](#), [Treatment of intersex persons](#) and [Access to services](#)).

- 2.4.12 Some LGBTI persons are rejected by their families and some have also experienced physical and sexual attacks, including ‘corrective rape’ and killing (see [Societal attitudes and treatment](#) and [Violence and discrimination](#)).
- 2.4.13 Sources report that there are a number of organisations operating in Cameroon providing various forms of assistance and support to LGBTI persons. However, civil society organisations and their members have also been subject to harassment, threats and violence by societal actors. NGOs have reported difficulties in obtaining legal approval with the authorities if their statutes mention LGBTI issues (see [LGBTI groups, civil society and human rights NGOs](#) and [Societal attitudes and treatment](#)).
- 2.4.14 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instructions on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), [Sexual orientation in asylum claims](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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#### d) Conclusion

- 2.4.15 In general, LGBTI persons are likely to face mistreatment from state and societal actors which, by its nature and frequency, may amount to persecution. Each case, however, needs to be considered on its facts, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that they face such a risk.
- 2.4.16 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instructions on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#), [Sexual orientation in asylum claims](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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## 2.5 Protection

- 2.5.1 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution from the state, they are unlikely to be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.5.2 Where the person has a well-founded fear of persecution by non-state actors, decision makers must assess whether the state can provide effective protection.
- 2.5.3 Same-sex sexual relations are prohibited and sexual minorities are afraid to go to the police as once their sexual orientation is known they are at risk of abuse or extortion by police officers. The police are also reported to be unresponsive to LGBTI persons’ requests for assistance. Furthermore The National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (CNDHL) activities in support of LGBTI persons were limited or almost non-existent. Therefore, in general, the state is able but not willing to offer effective protection (see [Arrests, prosecutions, detention and state discrimination](#), [Police action and behaviour](#) and [Ombudsman/complaints’ mechanisms](#)).
- 2.5.4 However, decision makers must consider each case on its facts. The onus is on the person to demonstrate why they would not be able to seek and obtain state protection.

- 2.5.5 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#). Decision makers must also refer to the [Guidance on sexual identity issues in asylum claims including intersex issues in asylum claims](#) and [Gender identity issues in the asylum claim](#).

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## 2.6 Internal relocation

- 2.6.1 In general, given the widespread societal and state hostility towards and discrimination against LGBTI persons, it will not be reasonable for a person to relocate. However, each case must be considered on its facts, taking into account the person's specific circumstances.
- 2.6.2 Internal relocation will not be an option if it depends on the person concealing their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the proposed new location for fear of persecution.
- 2.6.3 For further guidance on internal relocation see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.7 Certification

- 2.7.1 Where a claim is refused, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.
- 2.7.2 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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# Country information

Section 3 updated: 19 December 2019

## 3. Legal context

### 3.1 Constitution

- 3.1.1 The US State Department (USSD) human rights report for 2018 noted: 'The law does not explicitly prohibit discrimination against LGBTI persons in housing, employment, nationality laws, and access to government services such as health care. The constitution provides for equal rights for all citizens.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> USSD, '2018 Human Rights Practices Report' (section 6), March 2019, [url](#).

## 3.2 Cameroon Penal Code

- 3.2.1 Cameroon has a mixed legal system of English common law, French civil law, and customary law<sup>2</sup>.
- 3.2.2 Article 347-1 of [the Penal Code of Cameroon](#), adopted on 12 July 2016, 'Whoever has sexual relations with a person of the same sex shall be punished with imprisonment from 6 months to 5 years and a fine of from CFAF 20,000 to CFAF 200,000.'<sup>3</sup>
- 3.2.3 International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) State sponsored homophobia 2019 report highlighted the [Law on Cybersecurity and Cybercrime \(Law No. 2010/012 of 21 December 2010\)](#)<sup>4</sup> regarding making sexual propositions online:
- '1. Any person who makes sexual propositions to a person of their sex through electronic communications shall be punished with imprisonment of one to two years and a fine of 500,000 to 1,000,000 CFA francs or only one of these two penalties.
  - '2. The penalties provided in paragraph 1 above are doubled when the proposals have been followed by sexual intercourse.'<sup>5</sup>
- 3.2.4 CPIT was not able to find specific information on laws regarding trans or intersex persons (see [Bibliography](#)).

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## 3.3 Sharia

- 3.3.1 A Jstor Journal [part of ITHAKA – a non-profit organisation that works to 'preserve knowledge'<sup>6</sup>] article noted that 'Muslim law...is assimilated [in]to customary law and thus subjected to the rules of exclusion applicable to that system of law.'<sup>7</sup>

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Section 4 updated: 11 February 2020

## 4. State attitudes and treatment

### 4.1 Homophobic rhetoric

- 4.1.1 An Erasing 76 Crimes article from April 2019 reported on comments made by Pascal Charlemagne Messanga Nyamding, a politician and political science professor at the Institute of International Relations of Cameroon (IRIC) who had made a series of comments about homosexuality. This included accusing the candidate for the MRC opposition party, Maurice Kamto of having sex with young boys and claiming that Cameroon is ruled by "faggots". Some of his views which were communicated to his students and were recorded and posted online. Subsequently the IRIC council were

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<sup>2</sup> CIA The World Fact Book, Cameroon, (Government), updated 24 September 2019, [url](#).

<sup>3</sup> Government of Cameroon, The Penal Code of Cameroon (section 314-1), 12 July 2016, [url](#).

<sup>4</sup> Law on Cybersecurity and Cybercrime (Law No. 2010/012 of 21 December 2010), [url](#).

<sup>5</sup> ILGA, '2019 State Sponsored Homophobia Report' (p.312), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>6</sup> ITHAKA, Our mission, undated, [url](#).

<sup>7</sup> Jstor, 'The place of Muslim law in Cameroon's legal system', 2012 [url](#).

convened which resulted with some council members expressing offense at his statements and doubts over the language used and whether this constituted effective teaching methods, he was also reminded of ‘the need for lucidity and moderation in a classroom setting’. Messanga Nyamding apologised and said that he would be ‘cautious and reserved in the future’<sup>8</sup>.

#### 4.1.2 ILGA in their State sponsored homophobia 2019 report noted:

‘In 2013, Jacques Doo Bell, member of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms wrote in the Commission’s magazine that “homosexuals” were like “highway bandits and chicken thieves [who are] systematically lynched by the crowd” and recommended that they remain “extremely careful and discreet”.

‘In July 2013, in response to the murder of activist Eric Ohena Lembembe, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, Minister of Communication and Government spokesperson, explained that between 95% and 99% of society are “against homosexuality because their religions are against homosexuality”. He added that “maybe in 50 years from now things will be different [but] it is the duty of the President of the Republic to respect the will of his people”.

‘The National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms is Cameroon’s NHRI [National Human Rights Institution]. The entity not only negates and ignores SOGIESC issues and requests, but, as evinced in its reports, denies discrimination and upholds the country’s criminalisation laws.’<sup>9</sup>

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## 4.2 Government and political leaders attitude

4.2.1 The United Nations’ Committee Against Torture in its December 2017 concluding observations stated it was concerned ‘...that consensual relations between same-sex adults are still an offence in the State party.’ and ‘... by reports that cases of violence, harassment, “corrective rape” and murder against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons, and against the human rights defenders who report these violations, are not subject to thorough investigation.’<sup>10</sup>

4.2.2 ILGA in their State sponsored homophobia 2019 report noted that Cameroon had voted against a UN proposal<sup>11</sup> to protect LGBTI rights in 2011. As Camerons term of the Human Rights Council (HRC) had expired it did not vote on the same proposal in 2014 or 2016<sup>12</sup>.

4.2.3 The same ILGA report commented that:

‘The presidential elections of October 2018 were an opportunity to influence issues of diversity. Civil society organisations called on candidates to include issues of sexual and gender diversity in their policy agendas. For this purpose, a mapping of the candidates and their respective positions on the subject was carried out: of the nine candidates, three were classified as

<sup>8</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, ‘Cameroon: Professor under fire for homophobic remarks’, 4 April 2019, [url](#).

<sup>9</sup> ILGA World, ‘State sponsored Homophobia- 2019’ (p313), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>10</sup> UN, ‘Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Cameroon’, 18 December 2019, [url](#).

<sup>11</sup> UN, ‘Resolution adopted by HRC: 17/19 Human rights, SOGI’, 14 July 2011, [url](#).

<sup>12</sup> ILGA, ‘2019 State Sponsored Homophobia Report’ (p.313), March 2019, [url](#).

hostile, four had a “mixed” position and two had favourable approaches to these issues.’<sup>13</sup>

#### 4.2.4 Erasing 76 Crimes reported in May 2019 that:

‘Although Cameroon revised its criminal code in 2016, the provisions that penalizes same-sex relationships were unfortunately kept intact. In the international arena, Cameroon has rejected all recommendations on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. Even so, there is some political will to eradicate HIV from key population groups and the National Health Plan 2018-2022 identifies men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans women as a vulnerable population.’<sup>14</sup>

#### 4.2.5 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRBC) response of May 2019, based on a range of sources, several of which originally in French, stated:

[Quoting a sexual minority rights NGO and Human Rights Watch]  
“Cameroon prosecutes people for consensual same-sex conduct more aggressively than almost any country in the world”<sup>15</sup>. According to a [joint report by Cameroonian civil society organizations](#) [untranslated French document], submitted to the UN Human Rights Committee in October 2017 during an implementation review of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Cameroon [translation] “is the highest jailer of homosexuals in Africa”.<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.2.6 The Freedom House Freedom in the World Report 2019 noted: ‘LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people ...are generally excluded from political processes, and their interests are poorly represented by elected officials.’<sup>17</sup>

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### 4.3 Arrests, prosecutions, detention and state discrimination

#### 4.3.1 An October 2017 Joint NGO report, The Violations of the Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Individuals in Cameroon, and submitted to the United Nations Human Rights Committee noted:

‘Cameroon does prosecute people on the grounds of same-sex sexual acts. Civil society organizations in Cameroon have documented several cases of imprisonment and prosecution under Article 347-1 (former Article 347 bis) of the Penal Code. A civil society organization documented at least 7 cases in 2015. Another civil society organization has documented at least 51 arrests and prosecutions of LGBT people or those suspected of being gay or lesbian between 2005 and 2012. By 2012, it was reported by a group of non-profit organizations that “at least five people [were] in Cameroonian prisons on the basis of article 347 bis, with two serving out sentences on charges of

<sup>13</sup> ILGA, ‘2019 State Sponsored Homophobia Report’ (p.315), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>14</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, ‘Slow or no progress in Central Africa’, 20 May 2019, [url](#).

<sup>15</sup> HRW, ‘Cameroon: Rights abuses in Homosexuality prosecutions’, 21 March 2013, [url](#).

<sup>16</sup> IRBC, ‘Cameroon: Situation of sexual minorities...’ (section 2), 8 May 2019, [url](#).

<sup>17</sup> FH, ‘2019 Freedom in the World Report’ (section B), February 2019, [url](#).

consensual same-sex conduct, at least three in pre-trial detention. At least four others have cases pending against them but are free on bail.”<sup>18</sup>

#### 4.3.2 The same 2017 Joint NGO report also noted that:

‘Civil society organizations based in Cameroun have documented 21 cases in 2014 in Yaoundé 7 cases in 2015, and 33 cases in 2016 of arbitrary arrest of individuals based on their perceived or actual sexual orientation. Arbitrary detention in the context of police abuse is the beginning of multiple violations to the human rights of LGBT people. Once under police custody, detainees are subjected to discrimination, harassment, extortion and torture.[...] In May 2014, four men were detained by the police after returning to Northern Cameroon with condoms and lubricant in their pockets. The police assumed that the men were on their way to engage in same-sex acts. After three days of physical abuse, the men were released because they cleaned the police station. In September 2014, six individuals were arrested in a raid at a home, based on the indication by neighbors that it housed “homosexuals,” by the police in Kodengui.

‘Organizations and LGBT activists report that “weekend arrests” of LGBT people with the purposes of extortion are common in Cameroon. LGBT people or those perceived to be are detained on Friday and held through the weekend, then released after paying large sums of money. Two brigades, for example, in the town of Yaoundé are reputed to carry out arbitrary arrests with the aim of extorting the victims.

‘Many individuals that are detained on the basis of the Article 347-1 of the Penal Code are subjected to different forms of torture, which include forced anal examinations, which supposedly are conducted to “prove” that they have engaged in same-sex sexual acts. Human rights organizations have documented several cases in 2012 and 2013. In October 2013, police in Yaoundé arrested two men, after a mob denounced them of alleged homosexual acts. They were subjected to forced anal exams and insulted by the doctor who performed them. They were sentenced by a judge to six months in prison, relying partially on the medical reports following the anal exams as “evidence.” Humanity First Cameroon reported that in 2014, two young detainees were subjected to forced anal examinations, that were carried out by members of the police station of the 14th arrondissement of Ekounou. In June 2014, 19-year-old L. was denounced by his family and driven to the Eseka police station. L. spent one month detained. During this detention, L. was beaten every day for a month by the officers. People under custody are also humiliated by being forced to show their genitals so police officers could take photographs of them.’

#### 4.3.3 The same report went on ‘Blackmail and extortion are perhaps the most common and the least visible abuses that LGBT people are subject to in Cameroon. Victims are asked for money or other possessions in order to avoid being outed as gay. Most commonly, police officers extort people under threat of arrest and prosecution of Article 347-1 Penal Code. This is common with the aforementioned “weekend arrests.”’<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Joint NGO Report, ‘The Violations of the Rights of LGBT Individuals...’ (p.9), October 2017, [url](#).

<sup>19</sup> Joint NGO Report, ‘The Violations of the Rights of LGBT Individuals...’ (p.11-12), October 2017, [url](#).

- 4.3.4 The USSD report for 2018 noted: ‘LGBTI rights organizations such as the Cameroon Foundation for AIDS (CAMFAIDS), Humanity First Cameroon, Alternatives Cameroon, National Observatory of the Rights of LGBTI Persons and Their Defenders, and others reported several arrests of LGBTI persons.’<sup>20</sup>
- 4.3.5 The USSD report also stated that ‘In practice, security forces sometimes harassed persons on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, including individuals found with condoms and lubricants. This practice and the fear it generated in turn restricted access to HIV/AIDS services. Anecdotal reports also suggested some discrimination occurred in places of employment with respect to sexual orientation.’<sup>21</sup>
- 4.3.6 The Human Rights Watch World Report covering events in 2018 noted: ‘Police and gendarmes continued to carry out arrests and harassment of people they believe to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). In April [2018], police arrested four activists and a security guard at the office of AJO [Avenir Jeune de l’Ouest], an organization that works on HIV education with men who have sex with men (MSM), and other vulnerable groups. They spent a week in jail on spurious homosexuality charges before a lawyer secured their release. Cameroonian human rights organizations documented the arrest of at least 25 other men and at least two women on homosexuality charges in the first half of 2018.’<sup>22</sup>
- 4.3.7 The USSD Human Rights Report 2018 referring to the arrests at the AJO offices stated: ‘In an April 25 release, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, in partnership with the World Organization against Torture and the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), denounced the arrest and arbitrary detention of five staff members of the association Avenir Jeune de l’Ouest (AJO). AJO promoted the rights of LGBTI persons with HIV and sex workers in the West Region. According to the release, men in civilian clothing from the territorial police, on April 20, arrested the executive director and two other members of AJO, including a care worker, as they were leaving the organization’s premises. On April 21, two additional care workers from the organization were arrested at their places of residence. Police did not have warrants and took the five members of AJO to the Dschang central police station, where they experienced poor detention conditions on charges related to consensual same-sex conduct. In connection with this incident, 18 other men were arrested. For the first time in many years, authorities in the West Region introduced the prospect of forced anal exams for the 23 arrestees. The men were ordered to undergo such exams, but after intense advocacy by the lawyer representing the men, together with diplomatic pressure, the matter was dropped. The men did not have access to their lawyers until April 24 [2018].’<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> USSD, ‘2018 Human Rights Practices Report’ (section 6), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>21</sup> USSD, ‘2018 Human Rights Practices Report’ (section 6), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘2019 World Report for Cameroon’, 30 January 2019, [url](#).

<sup>23</sup> USSD, ‘2018 Human Rights Practices Report’ (section 6), March 2019, [url](#).

- 4.3.8 A Human Dignity Trust (HDT) website profile of Cameroon noted that in 2017 ‘LGBT NGOs, Humanity First Cameroon and Alternatives-Cameroun, claimed in a joint annual report that eight LGBT persons remained imprisoned for homosexuality in the Kondengui central prison in Yaoundé.’<sup>24</sup>
- 4.3.9 The same HDT profile stated that: ‘In May [2018], police arrested 25 men on suspicion of being gay. The arrest happened in establishments in the capital city that are known to be popular with the local gay community.’<sup>25</sup>
- 4.3.10 A Pink News article from May 2018 noted:
- ‘...arrests were made in the early hours of Saturday morning, as police raided institutions in the capital city of Yaoundé which are known to be popular with the local gay community.
- ‘The officers broke the door down at Le Mistral, a cabaret, after failing in their attempts to convince staff that they were simply customers trying to get into the locked venue.
- ‘One of the seven people arrested at the cabaret – which included a dancer, a waiter and security guard – said: “We informed them that the tavern was already closed, but they forced the door open.
- “Then they took us [to jail] without any reason,” he added.
- ‘...After police carried out the raid on Saturday, they immediately moved on to a cinema often used by gay people in the area, arresting 18 moviegoers.
- ‘The 25 men who were arrested were then taken to the police station.
- ‘Police Commander Parfait Nana said that two people had been released because they were “witnesses.”
- ‘He promised: “The remaining 23 will be interrogated; conclusions will be reached at the close of the investigations.
- “I already can reassure you that several types of violations have been identified, such as lack of a [national identity card], possession of narcotics and homosexuality.”
- ‘The commander said that despite the raids, he was not acting out of malice towards gay people.
- “Personally, I do not judge anyone and do not condemn anyone on the basis of their sexual orientation,” he said. “However, Cameroon has laws to enforce.”
- ‘The remaining 23 people were interrogated and tortured for two days.
- ‘They were then released on Monday without charge.’<sup>26</sup>
- 4.3.11 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada request response dated May 2019 based on a range of sources, mostly Cameroonian NGOs reporting in French, noted:

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<sup>24</sup> Human Dignity Trust, ‘Cameroon’ (Section Enforcement), undated, [url](#).

<sup>25</sup> Human Dignity Trust, ‘Cameroon’ (Section Enforcement), undated, [url](#).

<sup>26</sup> Pink News, ‘Cameroon police arrest and torture 25 men for being gay’, 15 May 2018, [url](#).

'Sources report that arrests are made arbitrarily or in violation of the Criminal Procedure Code. A [joint report published in February 2019 by sexual minority rights NGOs Alternatives Cameroun and Humanity First Cameroon](#), in collaboration with four other NGOs, including Alcondoms Cameroun, documents 56 cases of arbitrary arrests and 4 cases of imprisonment and criminal convictions in 2018.

'According to sources, arrests and prosecution are based on suspicion rather than evidence. The joint report by Cameroonian civil society organizations reports that [translation] "prosecution is regularly based on a neighbour's or stranger's information, [and] stereotypes such as clothing and conduct are included as evidence of the charge of homosexual acts".'<sup>27</sup>

- 4.3.12 Some prosecutions may be as a result of male rape in conflict rather than gay and bisexual men who are prosecuted for having same sex relations, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) June 2019 report noted:

'A rapid GBV [gender based violence] risk assessment in the NW [north west region] during this reporting period reveals that persons in crisis affected communities continue to suffer sexual violence, especially rape targeting women, girls and boys. There has been a major challenge in prosecuting cases of rape of young men as the definition of the Cameroon penal code does not provide for rape of men. Over the past months, lawyers have resorted to using 'forced homosexuality' as grounds for prosecution in such cases.'<sup>28</sup>

- 4.3.13 An article by World Politics Review in August 2019 stated that: 'Arrests under Article 347 bis still appear to be all too common. Though comprehensive nationwide totals are unavailable, for several years Human Rights Watch referred to Cameroon as the country that arrested more sexual minorities than any other in sub-Saharan Africa.'<sup>29</sup>

- 4.3.14 The Foreign and Commonwealth Office in its travel advice for British Citizens, updated 28 August 2019, the summary stated that: 'Homosexuality is not widely accepted in central African society and sexual acts between members of the same sex are illegal in Cameroon. There were arrests and prosecutions of homosexuals in the past.'<sup>30</sup>

- 4.3.15 Further details of homosexuality prosecutions can be found in the 2013 Human Rights Watch articles [Cameroon: Rights Abuses in 'Homosexuality' Prosecutions](#) and [Guilty by Association Human Rights Violations in the Enforcement of Cameroon's anti-homosexuality law](#)

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## 4.4 Police action and behaviour

- 4.4.1 An Erasing 76 Crimes article from September 2018 reported that a cross-dresser was attacked by a police officer in northwest Cameroon<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> CIRB, 'Cameroon: Situation of sexual minorities...' (section 2), 8 May 2019, [url](#).

<sup>28</sup> OCHA, 'Cameroon: North-West and South-West Situation Report' (p7), 30 June 2019, [url](#).

<sup>29</sup> World Politics Review, 'For Cameroon's LGBT Activists...', 20 August 2019, [url](#).

<sup>30</sup> FCO, 'Foreign Travel Advice – Local laws and customs - Cameroon', updated 28 August 2019, [url](#).

<sup>31</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, 'Police bludgeon Cameroon cross-dresser...', 25 September 2018, [url](#).

4.4.2 The US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 – Cameroon (USSD Human Rights report for 2018) stated ‘Police were generally unresponsive to requests to increase protection for lawyers who received threats because they represented LGBTI persons. Both police and civilians reportedly continued to extort money from presumed LGBTI individuals by threatening to expose them.’<sup>32</sup>

4.4.3 An Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada request response dated May 2019 based on a range of sources, mostly Cameroonian NGOs reporting in French, noted:

‘The joint report by Cameroonian civil society organizations reports that [translation] The President of Alcondoms Cameroun stated that [translation] “most” legal proceedings for same-sex relations [translation] have been marked by serious violations of human rights, such as acts of torture, extorted confessions, denial of access to legal assistance, and discriminatory treatment from law enforcement officers and judicial authorities.’

‘...a representative of the Central Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (Réseau des défenseurs des droits humains en Afrique Centrale, REDHAC), based in Douala, stated that Cameroonian authorities [translation] “are, in the main, the tormentor of sexual and gender minorities instead of performing their function of protecting populations”’.

‘...Sexual minorities cannot go to the police for violations because even when they are the complainants, once their sexual orientation is disclosed to the investigators, the victims become the perpetrators, and when they are not victims of scams by judicial police officers, the reason for their complaint is changed to “homosexuality” and they are incarcerated.’<sup>33</sup>

4.4.4 Further examples of police behaviour can be found in the 2013 Human Rights Watch article [Cameroon: Rights Abuses in ‘Homosexuality’ Prosecutions](#)

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## 4.5 Ombudsman/complaints’ mechanisms

4.5.1 An Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders 2015 report noted:

4.5.2 ‘The National Commission for Human Rights and Liberties (CNDHL) is nearly the only state institution in Cameroon whose role is to promote and protect human rights. Human rights defenders quite rightly based all their hopes on this commission. Unfortunately it lacks resources and independence from the Executive Power with which it often agrees on the (non) protection of defenders of the human rights of LGBTI persons, despite the potential it has for action thanks to its strong mandate and its flexible structure.

‘The National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (CNDHL) in Cameroon was created through Law No. 2004/015 of 22 July 2004. It is said

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<sup>32</sup> USSD, ‘2018 Human Rights Practices Report’ (section 6), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>33</sup> IRBC, ‘Cameroon: Situation of sexual minorities...’ (section 2), 8 May 2019, [url](#).

to be independent; its mandate includes consultation, observation, evaluation, dialogue, meetings, promotion and protection in the field of human rights and freedoms.

‘CNDHL is composed of four specialised sub-commission... Sub-Commission 4 on special issues can work on protection for human rights defenders who are subjected to threats, intimidation and reprisal because of their efforts to guarantee access to human rights for everyone, without discrimination, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

‘The 2012 Annual Report shows that CNDHL activities in support of LGBTI persons and LGBTI persons’ rights defenders were limited or almost non-existent.

‘...in its June 2013 report on the state of human rights in Cameroon in 2012, the Commission did not hide its refusal to protect LGBTI people “as long as sexual relations between people of the same sex is considered illegal”. Furthermore, the Commission asserted that “homosexuals living in Cameroon are not stigmatised nor systemically sanctioned because of their sexual orientation”. In his response to the press release by Amnesty International following the publication of a report that pointed to the persecution of homosexuals in various neighbourhoods and in the prisons, the President of the Commission explained that “the position of the CNDHL is similar to that of the nation (the government)”, notwithstanding the independence granted to the Commission by the law that created it.’<sup>34</sup>

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## 4.6 Government recognition of LGBTI NGOs

### 4.6.1 The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law Cameroon country report noted:

‘On December 22, 1999, the President of the Republic of Cameroon signed a new law affecting NGOs, which had been passed by the National Assembly in November. This new law, No. 99/014, regulates NGOs in Cameroon, known in French as “Organisations Non Gouvernementales.” NGOs or ONGs are now subject to a special regime, which requires them to enter into an agreement (agrément) under which they become entitled to pursue aims that are in the public interest (intérêt général) and receive certain tax benefits.’<sup>35</sup>

### 4.6.2 A joint NGO report from 2017 noted:

‘Many LGBT organizations have found obstacles in the process of obtaining legal recognition of their organizations. For example, CAMFAIDS (Cameroonian Foundation for Aids) needed to frame the organization’s goals in broad terms in order to get official approval. The organization CAMEF also was forced to rephrase its goals, and to eliminate the reference to LGBT people, in order to get officially registered.

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<sup>34</sup> OMCT, ‘Cameroon Homophobia and Violence Against Defenders...’ (p14-15), February 2015, [url](#).

<sup>35</sup> The International Journal of Not-for-Profit Law, ‘Country Reports: ...Cameroon’, March 2000, [url](#).

'In February 2003, an activist filed for registration of the "Association for the Defense of Homosexuals" (Association pour la Défense des Homosexuel-le-s - ADEFHO), but Cameroonian authorities "consistently refuse giving the organisation ADEFHO a registration number.'" <sup>36</sup>

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Section 5 updated: 19 December 2019

## 5. Societal attitudes and treatment

### 5.1 Societal norms and public opinion

5.1.1 An Afrobarometer survey from 2016 of tolerance of homosexuals indicated that only 11% of respondents in Cameroon would "strongly like," "somewhat like" or "not care" if they lived next to homosexuals.' <sup>37</sup>

5.1.2 A Rights Africa article from December 2018 noted:

'A...list of 82 alleged homosexuals is spreading in Cameroon, published anonymously and distributed electronically through social networks.

'It began on Dec. 11 [2018] as a PDF document attached to electronic messages with the title "List of gays in Cameroon and a portion of their dirty deeds."

'The list arrived 15 years after the newspaper Anecdote published a similar list that ruined the lives and reputations of 50 Cameroonian homosexual citizens and their families. In that case, the public response led the Paul Biya, the president of Cameroon, to speak out to calm outraged public sentiments.

'LGBT community members nervously opened the latest document to see if their names were there, which would mean they had suddenly become vulnerable to homophobic attacks on their lives, families and careers. The list outed many gay men who had been living discreetly in Yaoundé and Douala.

'This month's list attacked Christians and Muslims; employees of the telecommunications firms Camtel, MTN and Orange Cameroon; workers at the CUD community development agency and the business services firm Intelcia; a jeweler, a banker, a hairdresser, a doctor, a decorator, a dancer, a nightclub manager, a merchant, a pharmacist and a photographer among others.

'In Cameroon, the previous list of this kind was distributed last year through the same channels, especially WhatsApp. A radio host who was on that list confided that he became depressed after finding his name on the list, endured hostile comments from his colleagues and a few months was removed from his show.

'None of the people on the last list are listed again on the new list. It's new people every time.

'For the first time, the new list includes the names of LGBT rights activists and AIDS fighters. One of them is Yannick Ndomo, a human rights activist in

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<sup>36</sup> Joint NGO Report, 'The Violations of the Rights of LGBT Individuals...' (p.9), October 2017, [url](#).

<sup>37</sup> Afrobarometer, 'Good neighbours? Africans express high levels...', March 2016, [url](#).

the LGBT community since 2011, who has worked in a Global Fund program combatting AIDS and tuberculosis among men who have sex with men.

'This year's list includes minors who are dependents still living with their parents. In Cameroon, parents often evict children if they learn that the children are gay. Gay youths end up on the streets, cut off from the schools they had been attending, depressed or contending with other mental health problems.

'...In Cameroon, the latest lists have not been published by a newspaper that could be sued. Instead they appear on WhatsApp, where human rights activists do not know how to block them.'<sup>38</sup>

- 5.1.3 Mamba Online.com reported that a female Cameroonian footballer was in January 2019 thrown out of her team because she was a lesbian. The decision was consequently upheld by the Cameroon National Football Federation<sup>39</sup>.
- 5.1.4 Reporting on homophobia in the media in July 2019 Erasing 76 Crimes highlighted a popular TV channel 'Vision 4' and its show called "Tour d'Horizon" which debates social issues. Journalists on the show have described homosexuality as "against nature" and as being something alien imposed from the West<sup>40</sup>.
- 5.1.5 An Erasing 76 Crimes article from July 2019 stated: 'Among all LGBTI people in Cameroon, transgender Cameroonians are the most persecuted physically and psychologically because their gender identity often is visible. In response to transphobic attacks, organizations such as Transamical or Transigeance Cameroon have sprung up in Yaoundé, the nation's capital.'<sup>41</sup>
- 5.1.6 ILGA in their State sponsored homophobia 2019 report stated  
'Discourses on issues of sexual orientation remain extremely hostile in Cameroon. In October 2018, a science text book of life and the Earth, destined for fifth grade classes caused a scandal. In it "homosexuality" was characterised as "deviant"[...] The rationale presented for this content was the protection of children. A local NGO made their own argument and denounced the book as a "criminal initiative" that pretended "to promote zoophilia and homosexuality" following the UN agenda, plunging Cameroonian society into sexual immorality'.<sup>42</sup>

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## 5.2 Treatment of intersex persons

- 5.2.1 International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World) - State sponsored homophobia 2019 included a "Local Perspective Essay" written by Joachim Ntetmen for ILGA World. The essay noted:

'Issues related to intersex people have rarely been addressed officially and remain little-understood within and outside the LGBTI community. However,

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<sup>38</sup> Rights Africa, 'List of alleged homosexuals endangers 82 in Cameroon', 31 December 2018 [url](#).

<sup>39</sup> Mamba Online.com, 'Shattered dreams as lesbian footballer banned...', 10 January 2019, [url](#).

<sup>40</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, 'Cameroonian TV channel promotes homophobia', 6 July 2019, [url](#).

<sup>41</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, 'Cameroon: Trans leader in hiding after transphobic attack', 15 July 2019, [url](#).

<sup>42</sup> ILGA World, 'State sponsored Homophobia- 2019' (p315), March 2019, [url](#).

over the past two years intersex persons have started to organise in the city of Douala and already have at least 30 members, and their work in part is to draw attention (through documentation) to the discrimination and violence they experience. There are many cases of hastily-done and unnecessary surgeries that are often harmful to an individual's wellbeing, and that have been carried out without consent.<sup>43</sup>

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### 5.3 Violence and discrimination

#### 5.3.1 The Joint NGO submission to the UN Human Rights Committee of 2017 stated

'In Cameroon, people are attacked and killed on account of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Several cases of physical aggression and attacks were reported to civil society organizations (17 cases in 2014, 9 cases in 2015 and 20 cases in 2016). Also, civil society organizations documented two cases of attempted homicide, and two unexplained homicides in 2015. For instance, on August 27, 2015, Patrick Edou was tortured and killed by unknown persons. Patrick had received a phone call of a person who insisted to see him. The next morning, Patrick's family was informed about the crime. Patrick's body showed signs of great brutality and cruelty. The police officer who brought the body to the morgue declared that the victim had suffered an accident. The circumstances of his death remain unknown.'<sup>44</sup>

#### 5.3.2 An Erasing 76 Crimes article from June 2018 noted:

'In Cameroon, violent homophobes attack LGBT people, but they don't stop there. They also attack the families of LGBT people.

'Cameroonian LGBT rights activist Dominique Menoga fled to France for his life in 2012 and was granted asylum there. Now three members of his family are also seeking asylum to escape the persecution they face in Cameroon because of their association with him.'<sup>45</sup>

#### 5.3.3 Reuters reported in October 2018 that 'Almost 600 homophobic attacks and violations were reported in Cameroon last year [2017], according to [Humanity First Cameroon](#) [Facebook website in French], an LGBT+ umbrella organization, with one in five lesbians and one in 10 gay men reporting that they had been raped. Campaigners say the true scale of the problem is likely to be much worse as most attacks go unreported.'<sup>46</sup>

#### 5.3.4 Erasing 76 crimes reported that in December 2018, an anonymously published list of 82 persons accused of being "homosexuals" was circulated through social media: this outed many individuals who had been living discreetly in Cameroon<sup>47</sup>.

#### 5.3.5 A Rights Africa article from December 2018 reported that police were called to the home of a homosexual man whose partner was being violently

<sup>43</sup> ILGA World, 'State sponsored Homophobia- 2019' (p315), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>44</sup> Joint NGO Report, 'The Violations of the Rights of LGBT Individuals...' (p.13), October 2017, [url](#).

<sup>45</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, 'Cameroon: Anti-gay attackers target families too', 1 June 2018, [url](#).

<sup>46</sup> Reuters, 'Lesbian 'witches' chained and raped by families...', 2 October 2018, [url](#).

<sup>47</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, 'List of alleged homosexuals endangers 82...', 31 December 2018, [url](#).

attacked in the street in the early hours of the morning after being mistaken for a thief by a family member. Due to the volatile mood of neighbours and family the couple were forced to admit that they were a couple and when police arrived they were subsequently arrested on charges of homosexuality. Both were released after several days after paying a fine and one of the men lost his job when his employer found out about the charges against him<sup>48</sup>.

- 5.3.6 The US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 – Cameroon (USSD Human Rights report for 2018) stated ‘LGBTI individuals received anonymous threats by telephone, text message, and email, including of “corrective” rape, but authorities did not investigate allegations of harassment. Civil society members stated there were also cases where LGBTI individuals underwent corrective rape, sometimes through the facilitation of the victim’s own family.’<sup>49</sup>
- 5.3.7 Rights Africa reported in January 2019 that the premises of a gay advocacy organisation in Kribi (South coast Cameroon) was partly set on fire by a group of youths which resulted in the cancellations of a gay pride celebration<sup>50</sup>.
- 5.3.8 The Freedom House 2019 Freedom in the World Report noted that ‘Discrimination against the LGBT community is rife, and violence against LGBT people is not uncommon.’<sup>51</sup>
- 5.3.9 An Erasing 76 Crimes article from July 2019 reported on a violent attack on the leader of Cameroons transgender community. The victim was beaten by an unknown group, stripped naked and left for dead. She was unable to return to her home following the attack<sup>52</sup>. Her landlord said “This apartment in my establishment is not a refuge for faggots. I value my reputation and the morality of the place.”<sup>53</sup>
- 5.3.10 Reuters reported in October 2018 of cases of family violence against lesbian women who were chained and raped after their families found out about their sexuality<sup>54</sup>. The article stated ‘Almost 600 homophobic attacks and violations were reported in Cameroon last year, according to Humanity First Cameroon, an LGBT+ umbrella organisation, with one in five lesbians and one in 10 gay men reporting that they had been raped. Campaigners say the true scale of the problem is likely to be much worse as most attacks go unreported.’<sup>55</sup>
- 5.3.11 Erasing 76 Crimes reported in June 2019 that a 27 year old Cameroonian woman had been thrown out of her brothers home where she lived after he suspected her of being a lesbian<sup>56</sup> and on 30 August 2019 the parents of two

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<sup>48</sup> Rights Africa, ‘Battered and slashed, gay man seeks escape...’, 4 December 2018, [url](#).

<sup>49</sup> USSD, ‘2018 Human Rights Practices Report’ (section 6), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>50</sup> Rights Africa, ‘Youths disrupt Pride, burn advocacy office’, 9 January 2019, [url](#).

<sup>51</sup> Freedom House, ‘2019 Freedom in the World Report’ (section F), February 2019, [url](#).

<sup>52</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, ‘Cameroon: Trans leader in hiding after transphobic attack’, 15 July 2019, [url](#).

<sup>53</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, ‘Cameroon: Trans leader in hiding after transphobic attack’, 15 July 2019, [url](#).

<sup>54</sup> Reuters, ‘Lesbian ‘witches’ chained and raped by families...’, 2 October 2018, [url](#).

<sup>55</sup> Reuters, ‘Lesbian ‘witches’ chained and raped by families...’, 2 October 2018, [url](#).

<sup>56</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, ‘Cameroon man evicts sister over fear that she’s a lesbian’, 24 June 2019, [url](#).

men decided to stop paying for their sons' education after they discovered that they were gay<sup>57</sup>.

5.3.12 Also in June 2019 Erasing 76 Crimes reported that: 'In April [2019] when a Cameroonian man learned that his common-law wife was attracted to women, he assaulted her, raped her lover and threatened to kill them both.'<sup>58</sup>

5.3.13 Erasing 76 Crimes reported in August 2018 that 20-year-old Kenfack Tobi Aubin Parfait was beaten to death by his older brother who believed he was gay. The report stated that: 'Family members expressed relief that they no longer will need to live with the gay brother. The case has not gone to court. It is currently in the hands of law enforcement authorities.'<sup>59</sup>

5.3.14 The IRBC response of May, citing various NGO source material reported in French, noted:

'According to Reuters, family members "regularly" torture, rape and murder gay and lesbian relatives (Reuters 1 Oct. 2018). Notably, sources indicate that a young man was murdered by his own brother because of his perceived sexual orientation in 2018 (Reuters 1 Oct. 2018; Alternatives Cameroun, et al. [Feb. 2019], 6; Erasing 76 Crimes 18 Aug. 2018), in Douala (Alternatives Cameroun, et al. [Feb. 2019], 6; Erasing 76 Crimes 18 Aug. 2018).'

5.3.15 ILGA in their State sponsored homophobia 2019 citing HRW and The Guardian stated:

'In 2013, Eric Ohena Lembembe who was a prominent gay human rights activist and who headed the AIDS advocacy group Camfaids, was found dead in his home with his limbs and face burnt after a slew of attacks on human rights defenders in the country. No one has been arrested or convicted for his murder. In 2014, a gay man who had been jailed for sending a text message saying "I'm very much in love with you" was also found dead in prison after his family had removed him from a hospital where he was receiving medical treatment. A 2016 Human Rights Watch report documented cases of forced anal examinations by the authorities conducted on men arrested on suspicion of engaging in same-sex sexual conduct.'<sup>61</sup>

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## 5.4 Anti-LGBTI protests

5.4.1 The ILGA 2019 report stated, 'In January 2019 [...] a group of anti-gay youths shut down a gay advocacy organisation after they set part of the group's office on fire, and forced the cancellation of a planned gay pride celebration.'<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, 'You're gay? No more school for you!', 30 August 2019, [url](#).

<sup>58</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, 'Assaults, rape, death threats over lesbian affair', 14 June 2019, [url](#).

<sup>59</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, 'Brother kills brother for being gay', 18 August 2018, [url](#).

<sup>60</sup> IRBC, 'Cameroon: Situation of sexual minorities...' (section 3), 8 May 2019, [url](#).

<sup>61</sup> ILGA World, 'State sponsored Homophobia- 2019' (p312), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>62</sup> ILGA World, 'State sponsored Homophobia- 2019' (p313), March 2019, [url](#).

## 5.5 Pro-LGBTI marches/gay pride

- 5.5.1 CPIT was not able to find specific evidence of any planned or historic pro-LGBTI or gay pride marches in the sources consulted ([see Bibliography](#)).

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## 5.6 Gay 'scene' or 'community'

- 5.6.1 News stories from different sources indicated the existence of gay friendly venues in Yaoundé and Doula but often in the context of the arrest of persons present <sup>63 64 65</sup>.

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## 5.7 Religious attitudes/treatment

- 5.7.1 A joint NGO report noted that 'Discrimination against LGBT people in Cameroon is very common, and religious leaders [...] play a fundamental role in perpetuating this discrimination and stigmatization. LGBT organizations report that religious groups publicly express their rejection to "homosexuality," and associate same-sex sexual behaviors with Satanism.'<sup>66</sup>

- 5.7.2 A February 2018 article on the Religion News Service (RNS) website stated: '...many LGBTQ people in Cameroon have trouble reconciling their faith and sexuality. Nickel Liwandi, executive director of the Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS, attributes this to religious leaders' hardline speech and Cameroonian law, which represses intimate relationships between people of the same sex.

'Cameroon is a secular country in which many religions live side by side. Of the country's 23 million people, nearly 69 percent are Christian (mostly Catholic and Protestant), 21 percent are Muslim and 6 percent are animists.

'The Catholic Church, Cameroon's largest Christian denomination, produced in 2013 an official [Declaration of the Bishops of Cameroon on Abortion, Homosexuality, Incest and Sexual Abuse of Minors](#) in which they called on "all believers and people of good will to reject homosexuality and the so-called 'gay marriages' and to accompany those who are inclined towards homosexuality and homosexuals by means of prayer, spiritual follow-up and compassion, in view of their conversion."

'This same statement added: "homosexuality is not a human right but a disposition that seriously harms humanity because it is not based on any value intrinsic to human beings; 'it is an abomination'."

'Cameroon's Muslim communities have not issued official joint declarations on homosexuality, but some imams have addressed the subject during important holidays and celebrations. In 2016, during a sermon for Eid al-Adha, Sheikh Mubarak Mbombo Ibrahim, the national president of

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<sup>63</sup> Gay Nation, 'Arrests Made During Violent Gay Bar Raid in Cameroon', 20 May 2018, [url](#).

<sup>64</sup> Rights Africa, 'Cameroon: Visit to gay-friendly night spot leads to arrest...', 10 July 2018, [url](#).

<sup>65</sup> Mambaonline, 'Cameroon police raid gay bar and arrest everyone inside', 11 October 2016, [url](#).

<sup>66</sup> Joint NGO Report, 'The Violations of the Rights of LGBT Individuals...' (p.16), October 2017, [url](#).

Cameroon's Conference of Imams, declared that homosexuality is a "perversion" and a "degrading practice."

'Recently, several NGOs, including Humanity First Cameroon, have started initiatives to raise awareness of LGBTQ issues among religious leaders.

"We want to act with opinion leaders to address homophobic discourse. These leaders have a great influence on the lives of those who listen to them. Sometimes they are not aware of the damage their speech can cause," said Yves Tonkeu, human rights officer at Humanity First Cameroon.

....

'Humanity First Cameroon organizes regular meetings with religious leaders of the country's main denominations to discuss the consequences of their speech.

'Representatives from Humanity First Cameroon and other NGOs working in this space, including Alternatives Cameroon, said they appreciate the fact that religious leaders are beginning to interact with men who have sex with men and lesbians, even if their discourse remains mostly unchanged.

"The change will be gradual. In the meantime, we are working to strengthen the minds of gay people and restore their self-esteem," said Paul Thierry Mbida, a member of Humanity First Cameroon.<sup>67</sup>

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Section 6 updated: 19 December 2019

## **6. Recorded incidents of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

6.1.1 The following sources have provided data around incidents of sexual, psychological and physical violence towards LGBTI persons in Cameroon. However, it should be noted that it was not always obvious if the perpetrator was a representative of the state or society in general.

6.1.2 The USSD report for 2018 noted: 'In a midterm report covering the period from January to May [2018], Alternatives Cameroon recorded 64 cases of violence against LGBTI individuals, including three cases of arbitrary detention, 30 cases of psychological violence, one case of sexual violence, 18 cases of physical violence, and 12 cases of blackmail and extortion.'<sup>68</sup>

6.1.3 The IRBC response of May, citing various NGO source material reported in French, noted:

'The February 2019 joint report states that there is [translation] "widespread homophobia" in Cameroon (Alternatives Cameroun, et al. [Feb. 2019], 6). According to sources, sexual minorities are victims of violence (Humanity First Cameroon 29 Mar. 2019; Alternatives Cameroun, et al. Feb. 2019, 6; REDHAC 4 Apr. 2019), discrimination (Humanity First Cameroon 29. Mar. 2019; AJO 12 Apr. 2019; REDHAC 4 Apr. 2019), and stigmatization (REDHAC 4 Apr. 2019; AJO 12 Apr. 2019). The October 2017 civil society

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<sup>67</sup> RNS, 'In Cameroon, LGBTQ people struggle to reconcile faith and sexuality', 23 April 2018, [url](#).

<sup>68</sup> USSD, '2018 Human Rights Practices Report' (section 6), March 2019, [url](#).

report adds that members of sexual minorities are also [translation] “victims of intimidation, humiliation and harassment” (Civil society Oct. 2017, 11).

‘According to sources, the mistreatment of sexual minorities is reported on a daily basis (Alcondoms Cameroun 4 Apr. 2019), or [translation] “almost daily” (REDHAC 4 Apr. 2019). The President of Alcondoms Cameroun stated that there has been an increase in homophobia in recent years, both among law enforcement officials and within society in general (Alcondoms Cameroun 4 Apr. 2019). Similarly, the REDHAC representative stated that violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity [translation] “appeared to be calming down in 2016, when we documented fewer cases, but there was an increased prevalence of violations in 2017 and 2018” (REDHAC 4 Apr. 2019).

‘Sources report that there is a high incidence of physical violence towards sexual minorities (Human Rights Watch 17 Jan. 2019; ILGA Mar. 2019, 314). According to the President of Alcondoms Cameroun, [translation] “the types of violence noted range from arson of homes to burglaries to violence causing death. Threats and intimidation by SMS or through social media are routine” (Alcondoms Cameroun 4 Apr. 2019). The February 2019 joint report notes that sexual minorities are also victims of blackmail (Alternatives Cameroun, et al. [Feb. 2019], 6). The same report identifies the following cases of violations other than arbitrary arrest or detention in 2018:

- ‘Extortion, scams or blackmail: 198 cases;
- ‘Physical violence: 204 cases (including assaults, [translation] “inhumane treatment,” injury to physical integrity and torture);
- ‘Sexual violence: 8 cases;
- ‘Psychological violence: 509 cases;
- ‘Hate speech: 152 cases (including misinformation and promotion of hatred and violence);
- ‘Murder: 3 cases (Alternatives Cameroun, et al. [Feb. 2019], 10)...

‘According to the same source, 2018 was particularly marked by an increase in the number of violations compared to previous years: there were 1,134 cases of violations of rights of sexual minorities reported in 2018, as compared to 578 in 2017 (Alternatives Cameroun, et al. [Feb. 2019], 17).’<sup>69</sup>

#### 6.1.4 The ILGA 2019 report stated

‘In 2018, five LGBTI human rights defenders were arrested at a youth centre run by the Avenir Jeune de l’Ouest (Youthful Future of the West) and ordered to undergo anal exams after they were released on bail. [...]A UN joint (12 CSOs) shadow report of October 2017, documented cases of extortion and blackmail by police officers based on perceived or actual sexual orientation, noting at least 67 cases in 2016. A media report in October 2018 highlighted cases of family violence against lesbian women who were chained and raped after their families found out about their sexuality. Four cases of “corrective rape” were documented in 2014, and

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<sup>69</sup> IRBC, ‘Cameroon: Situation of sexual minorities...’ (section 3), 8 May 2019, [url](#).

seven cases in 2016. In December 2018, a list of persons accused of being “homosexuals” was disseminated through social media: this outed many individuals who had been hiding their identities.’<sup>70</sup>

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Section 7 updated: 19 December 2019

## 7. LGBTI groups, civil society and human rights NGOs

### 7.1.1 Largely translated sources in an Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada request response from May 2019 noted:

‘According to the Humanity First Cameroon representative, sexual minorities can turn to a number of NGOs. The President of Alcondoms Cameroun stated the following:

’...

‘There is an observation platform made up of more than 25 organizations [in relation to sexual and gender identity] across the country that, with support of local and foreign partners, have developed a monitoring system to report, document and follow cases of violations recorded in the country.

‘The group has been effective in terms of documentation and in monitoring cases of violations identified in the four major regions of Cameroon.

‘However, according to the representative of Humanity First Cameroon, the NGOs are primarily located in Yaoundé and Douala and have a minimal presence in other parts of Cameroon.

‘Sources indicate that the following organizations actively advocate for the rights of sexual minorities:

‘Alternatives Cameroun, Avaf [Association pour la valorisation de la femme, Association AVAF] and Humanity First Cameroon;

‘Camfaids, Affirmative Action, and WIFC [Women in Front Cameroon (WIFC), Transamical, Positive Vision and Transigeance;

‘Acodevo, Alcondoms Cameroun, Association Amis du Cœur, Association des jeunes solidaires de Garoua, AJO, Cerludhus, Elles Cameroun, Ladies Cooperation and Synergía - Initiatives for Human Rights.

‘According to the representative of Humanity First Cameroon, the various organizations

‘[translation]

‘offer violence prevention programs on some very specific topics, such as “how to behave in the event of an arbitrary arrest.” They also provide legal support to people involved in legal proceedings due to their real or presumed sexual orientation. They are all involved in advocacy activities with the aim of fostering a positive environment.

‘The Alcondoms Cameroun representative also said that members of his organization [translation] “provide legal assistance to people who are convicted because of their sexual orientation, work to prevent AIDS, and

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<sup>70</sup> ILGA World, ‘State sponsored Homophobia- 2019’ (p313), March 2019, [url](#).

support people who have been rejected by family and friends because of their sexual orientation”. The same source explained that numerous NGOs [translation] “are trying to change mindsets and reduce discrimination in society in general through advocacy programs that are run and funded by [NGOs] and foreign donors”. According to the February 2019 joint report, the organizations that participated in writing the report

[translation]

‘often provided assistance to people who had been arrested and tried, as much as possible, to limit the impact of other abuse and rights violations by providing medical, psychosocial and legal assistance. Half of the cases of violence receive a response. Documentation that is increasingly rigorous helps to measure how the situation is evolving.

‘However, the same report adds that [translation] “there were activities to educate LGBTI [persons] about their rights, but the desired outcomes have not been achieved,” and sexual minorities are still ill-informed on this topic.’<sup>71</sup>

#### 7.1.2 The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) listed member organisations for Cameroon:

‘ACHREDHO-CAMEROUN

‘ACODES-Cameroun - Sex Workers

‘ADEFHO

‘Alternatives-Cameroun

‘Association Espoir Plus

‘Association de Lutte - violences aux Femmes

‘Avenir Jeune de l'Ouest (AJO)

‘COLIBRI

‘Cameroonian Foundation For AIDS - CAMFAIDS

‘GIC ASSISTANCE AUX PERSONNES EN DETRESSE (associate member)

‘Humanity First Cameroon

‘Les adolescents contre le sida

‘Rainbow cooperation limited

‘SID ADO

‘Singaboud

‘Working for our Wellbeing.’<sup>72</sup>

#### 7.1.3 Erasing 76 Crimes reporting on a newly formed trans advocacy network stated that:

‘Cameroon’s National Strategic Plan for the Fight Against HIV / AIDS has identified transgender people as among those who are most highly vulnerable to the disease. Several recent surveys have revealed some of the

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<sup>71</sup> CIRB, ‘Cameroon: Situation of sexual minorities...’, (section 4), 8 May 2019, [url](#).

<sup>72</sup> ILGA, ‘Member Organisations-Cameroon’, undated, [url](#).

reasons: The trans community is strongly affected by extreme poverty and exclusion, which combine with transphobic violence and discrimination to increase its exposure to HIV / AIDS.

‘Against this background, RITA (the TransAfrican Independent Network) has emerged with plans for change. It is a collaborative effort of Cameroonian trans associations, in particular Transamical and Transigeance.

‘Its focus is on problems of public recognition of Cameroonian trans people’s gender identities and on efforts to improve their access to education, justice and health services.

‘The network has plans for sessions to train trans leaders to be more aware of other trans Cameroonians’ problems and to prepare them to advocate for a reduction in transphobic violence and discrimination.

“We have created an organization dedicated to the needs and issues of transgender people in Cameroon,” says the president of RITA, who currently remains anonymous for safety. “Now we can show what we are capable of.”<sup>73</sup>

#### 7.1.4 Erasing 76 Crimes in June 2019 reported that:

‘A group of young lawyers and courtroom professionals has founded Defenders Without Borders (Défenseurs Sans Frontières, or DSF), a human rights organization working on behalf of vulnerable Cameroonian citizens, including young women, gay men and lesbians.

‘It also helps victims of discrimination and torture, people subject to arbitrary arrest, and detainees who lack legal and judicial support. Through education and advocacy, DSF aims reduce the frequency of violence and human rights violations against vulnerable people in Cameroonian society.

‘Another of its goals is the reduction of unemployment and illiteracy in the LGBTI community. Stephane Aboa, executive coordinator of DSF, says that goal also addresses the problem of LGBTI people forced to turn to prostitution to survive.

‘Officially recognized in November 2018, DSF began operation in January [2019].’<sup>74</sup>

#### 7.1.5 An Erasing 76 Crimes from October 2019 reported that:

‘Cameroon’s LGBTI rights watchdog group is adding an advocacy office and getting a new logo.

‘The 32 LGBTI rights organizations that formed Cameroon’s human rights watchdog group, the Unity Platform, gathered recently in Yaoundé to review the organization’s operations.

‘The Unity Platform and its governing body, the National Observatory for the Rights of LGBTI People and their Advocates, began operations in 2017.

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<sup>73</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, ‘Trans people form trans advocacy network’, 31 July 2019, [url](#).

<sup>74</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, ‘New lawyers group fights violence and stigma in Cameroon’, 11 June 2019, [url](#).

'Representatives of the 32 member organizations [LGBTI rights] met Sept. 29 to Oct. 2 [2019] in an undisclosed secure setting, away from homophobic glances and hate speech.

'The participants represented each member organization of the Unity Platform, including [Camfaids](#), Alternatives Cameroon, Affirmative Action and Colibri, to name but a few. Human rights attorney Michel Togue was on hand to help with the discussions.

'The gathering decided to establish an ad hoc advocacy committee that will work side-by-side with the Unity office and human rights observatory.

'The assembly also selected a new logo from three that were proposed.

'The vision of the Unity Platform is to build a Cameroonian society based on the values of justice, freedom, equality, democracy, tolerance and respect for individual rights as well as for socio-economic, political, civic and cultural rights. Its mission is to promote and protect the rights of LGBT+ people and their defenders, as well as to strengthen the bonds of solidarity and the capacities of LGBT+ organizations.

'It aims to create a national space for consultation and sharing experiences on strategies for the protection of human rights linked to sexual orientation and gender identity.

'Its activities include collecting reports about gender-based violence and producing an annual report about human rights violations in Cameroon.'<sup>75</sup>

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Section 8 updated: 19 December 2019

## 8. Access to services

### 8.1 Overview

- 8.1.1 The US State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2018 – Gambia (USSD Human Rights report for 2018) stated 'The law does not explicitly prohibit discrimination against LGBTI persons in housing, employment, nationality laws, and access to government services such as health care. The constitution provides for equal rights for all citizens.'<sup>76</sup>

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### 8.2 Health programmes

- 8.2.1 International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World) - State sponsored homophobia 2019 included a 'Local Perspective Essay' written by Joachim Ntetmen for ILGA World. The essay noted:

'In terms of progress, although timid, the state response to HIV with men who have sex with men (MSM) has been included in the national HIV plans since 2011, and more recently, the 2018-2022 National HIV Plan also includes trans persons. Issues related to gender identity are achieving more visibility and a number of trans organisations have consolidated: it was their efforts that ensured inclusion, and recognition of specific vulnerability to HIV

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<sup>75</sup> Erasing 76 Crimes, 'Cameroon's Unity human rights watchdog project...', 25 October 2019, [url](#).

<sup>76</sup> USSD, '2018 Human Rights Practices Report' (section 6), March 2019, [url](#).

exposure, of trans persons in National HIV Plan. Further, these strategies now include a human rights perspective, access to care is a battle far from being won. Lesbians and bisexual women, for example, remain ignored and invisible in health programs.’<sup>77</sup>

#### 8.2.2 Human Rights Watch’s Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Cameroon noted in 2019 that:

‘Cameroon’s laws deny LGBT people access to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The criminalization of consensual same-sex conduct... infringes on the right to health of people who are sexual and gender minorities. Studies demonstrate that laws criminalizing same-sex intimacy pose barriers to HIV prevention, care, and treatment services.

‘...The [Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS \(UNAIDS\)](#) has found that health centers in Cameroon have turned away clients on the basis of their presumed sexual orientation. Sexual minorities are often afraid to seek services, for fear of their sexual orientation being exposed.

‘Men who have sex with men (MSM) and transgender women are not adequately reached by current government prevention programs. Cameroon’s National AIDS Control Committee conducted its first study of HIV prevalence rates among MSM in 2011, in the cities of Douala and Yaoundé. It found extraordinarily high prevalence rates – 24% in Douala and 44% in Yaoundé – indicating the urgent need to target MSM in HIV/AIDS prevention efforts. Cameroon’s 2018-2022 National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) called for government efforts to target MSM, though it makes no reference to transgender women, another vulnerable group. It also raises concerns regarding the “tightening of the legislative and social environment” with regard to MSM as an obstacle to care, but does not specifically call for decriminalization of same sex relations. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health has called for the decriminalization of homosexual sex as an essential step in ensuring the right to the highest attainable standard of health is upheld.’<sup>78</sup>

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### 8.3 Accommodation, employment and education

8.3.1 The USSD report for 2018 noted that ‘Anecdotal reports also suggested some discrimination occurred in places of employment with respect to sexual orientation.’<sup>79</sup>

8.3.2 CPIT was not able to find other specific information on LGBTI persons access to accommodation, employment and educational services in the sources consulted ([see Bibliography](#)).

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<sup>77</sup> ILGA World, ‘State sponsored Homophobia- 2019’, (p315), March 2019, [url](#).

<sup>78</sup> HRW, Submission to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural...’ 28 January 2019, [url](#).

<sup>79</sup> USSD, ‘2018 Human Rights Practices Report’ (section 6), March 2019, [url](#).

# Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#). The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToRs, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Legal context
  - Constitution
  - Legislation
  - Criminal/Penal code
- State attitudes and treatment, incl. the law in practice
  - Arrests and detention of LGBTI persons and prosecutions for same sex acts and other offences
  - Police violence
  - Police responses to reports of anti- LGBTI violence
- Societal attitudes and treatment
  - Societal norms
  - Violence and discrimination
  - Anti-LGBTI protests
  - Pro-LGBTI marches/gay pride
  - Gay 'scene' or 'community'
- Access to services
  - Healthcare
  - Accommodation
  - Employment and Education
- LGBTI groups, civil society and human rights NGO's

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# Version control

## Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **1.0**
- valid from **11 February 2020**

## Changes from last version of this note

Updated country information

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