



Q09663. Cameroon – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 01 April 2009

Up to date information on the SCNC with particular emphasis on how their supporters are treated.

The *US Department of State* reports:

” The government considered the SCNC illegal because it advocates secession and authorities refused to register it as a political organization. During the year security forces preemptively arrested approximately 40 leaders, members, and supporters of the SCNC to prevent them from participating in unauthorized political meetings.

For example, on February 9, Bamenda police preemptively arrested 19 SCNC activists gathered in a private residence. Police arrested the activists to prevent them from celebrating the Day of Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization. On February 13, the Bamenda prosecutor released them on bail, pending formal charges and eventual trial.” (US Department of State (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Cameroon*)

Freedom House reports:

” The requisite administrative authorization for public meetings is often used to restrict freedom of assembly and association. Meetings of the banned SCNC are routinely disrupted. Trade union formation is permitted, but it is subject to numerous restrictions and government interference.” (Freedom House (2 July 2008) *Freedom in the World 2008 – Cameroon*)

Amnesty International states:

” About 40 members of the SCNC were arrested on 20 January as the organization's National Vice-Chairman, Nfor Ngala Nfor, was about to address a press conference in Bamenda. Several SCNC members, including Nfor Ngala Nfor, were reportedly injured during the arrests. Although most of those arrested were released within a few hours, Nfor Ngala Nfor and at least 12 others were detained without trial for nearly two months. At the end of the year, nearly 40 members of the SCNC were awaiting trial on charges ranging from wearing SCNC T-shirts to agitating for secession. In December, the case against those arrested on 20 January was dismissed by the court after the prosecution repeatedly failed to produce witnesses.” (Amnesty International (28 May 2008) *Amnesty International Report 2008 – Cameroon*)

Amnesty International states:

" Members of the security forces arrested at least seven SCNC members on 11 February 2008. They had been meeting in a Presbyterian Youth Centre at Azeri Old Church junction in Mankon, Bamenda. A day earlier, some 20 SCNC members, including SCNC Assistant National Organizing Secretary Fidelis Chinkwo Ndeh, had been arrested in Bamenda. Ten of them were detained at a GMI detention centre, while 10 others were detained at a police station in the town." (Amnesty International (29 January 2009) *Cameroon: Impunity underpins persistent abuse*)

IRIN reports:

" About 20 members of an Anglophone secessionist group in Cameroon have been jailed for the past month without charge, reflecting what their lawyers say is the latest effort to silence government critics without providing due process.

The members of the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC) were detained on 20 January when they attempted to hold a press conference led by the group's vice chairman, Nfor Ngala Nfor. Two scheduled hearings on the case have been postponed.

"The authorities arrested them under the pretext that they weren't authorised to hold the meeting," said Blaise Berinyuy, a lawyer for the group. "In recent years arrests of this kind have been commonplace and the situation hasn't improved." (IRIN (19 February 2007) *CAMEROON: Secessionist minority Anglophone group silenced*)

The *UK Home Office* states:

" The SCNC has alleged that many of its members are harassed, followed and occasionally beaten by Government security forces, because of their allegiance. In 2007, the police reportedly put the houses of SCNC officials and activists under surveillance, searched the houses of some SCNC leaders, and disrupted SCNC meetings in private residences. The authorities also refused to grant the SCNC permission to hold rallies and meetings on numerous occasions during the year. According to the SCNC, members and their families are also denied schooling and jobs.¹⁰

3.7.5 Sufficiency of protection. As this category of applicants' fear is of ill-treatment/persecution by the state authorities, they cannot apply to these authorities for protection.

3.7.6 Internal relocation. As this category of applicants' fear is of ill-treatment/persecution by the state authorities, relocation to a different area of the country to escape this threat is not feasible." (UK Home Office (29 July 2008) *Operational Guidance Note – Cameroon*)

Amnesty International reports:

" About 40 members of the SCNC were arrested on 20 January 2007 as the organization's National Vice-Chairman, Nfor Ngala Nfor, was about to address a press conference in Bamenda. Several SCNC members, including Nfor Ngala Nfor, were reportedly injured during the arrests. Although most of those arrested were released within a few hours, Nfor Ngala Nfor and at least 12 others were detained without trial for nearly two months. By December 2008, nearly 40 members of the SCNC were still awaiting trial on charges ranging from wearing SCNC T-shirts to agitating for secession. In December 2007, the case against those arrested on 20 January 2007 was dismissed by the court after the prosecution failed to produce witnesses.

Members of the security forces arrested at least seven SCNC members on 11 February 2008. They had been meeting in a Presbyterian Youth Centre at Azeri Old Church junction in Mankon, Bamenda. A day earlier, some 20 SCNC members, including SCNC Assistant National Organizing Secretary Fidelis Chinkwo Ndeh, had been arrested in Bamenda. Ten of them were detained at a GMI detention centre, while 10 others were detained at a police station in the town." (Amnesty International (29 January 2009) *Cameroon: Impunity underpins persistent abuse [AFR 17/001/2009]*)

An October 2008 article in *The Post* newspaper states:

"The Chairman of the Southern Cameroons National Council, SCNC, Chief Ayamba Ette Otun, 82, and 23 other activists were Monday, October 6, arrested and detained in Tiko.

A few of them were reportedly badly beaten, including a cameraman who sustained a broken leg. The activists, 23 men and a woman were reportedly whisked off from one James Sabum's residence in Mutengene by heavily armed soldiers comprised of a special squad from Tiko, while the activists were welcoming their Chairman from the United Nations, UN.

One of the activists, Joseph Ayuk, Precinct Chairman of Tiko Central, told *The Post* that the meeting was convened to welcome their Chairman and to take stock of the council's activities at the UN, 10 Downing Street, London and Brussels in Belgium.

He said their Chairman was presenting a memorandum from the UN and pictures of the October 1 celebrations in London and Brussels and the state of their struggle. "While we were deliberating in Pa Sabum's residence, a contingent of policemen led by Police Commissioner, Pascal Andi, who must have been tipped off, stepped in and seized a video camera from our cameraman." (*The Post* (10 October 2008) – *Cameroon; Ayamba, 23 SCNC Activists Detained, Tortured*)

Another article in *The Post* from July 2008 states:

"Scores of gendarmes from the Ntarinkon Brigade in Bamenda Friday, July 25, stormed the Secretariat of a faction of Southern Cameroons National Council, SCNC, and arrested its leader, Thomas Nwanchan,

Supervised by the Ntarinkon Brigade Commander, Priso, the gendarmes ransacked the office and pulled down the sign post. Priso said the SCNC is

an illegal separatist movement and they cannot fold their arms and watch the liberation movement carry out illegal activities.

To him, the SCNC is a threat to national unity and all its activities must be crushed. He said his colleagues had been monitoring their activities.” (The Post (31 July 2008) – *Cameroon; SCNC Faction Leader Arrested*)

A report from *The Post* on the arrest of 5 SCNC activists in October 2007 states:

“The arrest followed a peaceful manifestation by the activists at the Mbve Motor Park and its environs as part of celebrations marking what they termed the ‘46th anniversary of the Independence of Southern Cameroons’. The manifestation included a peaceful match to and from the Park, the singing of the SCNC Anthem and flying of flags.” (The Post (11 October 2007) - *5 SCNC Activists Arrested On October 1*)

A July 2007 report from *World Organisation Against Torture* states:

“According to the information received, Mr. Nfor Ngala Nfor and the above 11 representatives were arrested, along with other members of SCNC (non-identified), during a press conference held within the premises of the SCNC office in Bamenda on 20 January 2007 by security forces without any warrant of arrest. After the opening of the press conference, the premises were raided by security forces of the Gendarmerie and Divisional Officers from the Mezam region who reportedly used excessive force, resulting in a large number of injuries.

Members of the SCNC had assembled civilian and journalists for a press conference to inform of Mr. Nfor’s recent efforts to bring international attention to their situation. The SCNC advocates for increased autonomy for Cameroon’s English-speaking minority.

After some of the arrested members were released for various reasons, 12 of them, including Mr. Nfor Ngala Nfor, were transferred on 22 January 2007 to the Bamenda Central Prison. While Mr. Ngiewih Asunkwan was released on 6 March 2007, the others remained in detention. (World Organisation Against Torture (09 July 2007) – *Release of Mr. Tanto Simon*)

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources Consulted:

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Freedom House
Google
Human Rights Watch
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
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Refugee Documentation Centre Query Database
UK Home Office
UNHCR Refworld
US Department of State
World Organisation Against Torture
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