



COI QUERY

Country of Origin	CAMEROON
Title	Women victims of rape: legal framework and treatment by society
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All sources used are referenced and cited in the bibliography section. A quality review has been performed in line with the above mentioned COI methodology. This document does not claim to be exhaustive or conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to international protection. If a certain event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

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COI QUERY RESPONSE – Cameroon

Women victims of rape: legal framework and treatment by society

1. Legal framework

The Cameroonian Law 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 relating to the Penal Code penalises rape as follows:

SECTION 296: Rape

Whoever by force or moral ascendancy compels any person, whether above or below the age of puberty, to have sexual Intercourse with him shall be punished with imprisonment for from 5 (five) to 10 (ten) years.

SECTION 297: Subsequent Marriage

Marriage freely consented between the offender and the victim, even where she is over puberty at the time of commission of the offence provided for in Sections 295 [private indecency] and 296 above, shall have no effect on the prosecution and conviction.¹

The United States Department of State (USDOS) report on human rights practices in Cameroon covering 2022 described that ‘the law does not address spousal rape’.² Furthermore, Section 339 (2) of the Penal Code states that ‘in case of pregnancy resulting from rape, abortion by a qualified medical practitioner after certificate by the prosecution of a good case shall constitute no offense’.³

A report on the state of human rights in Cameroon with disaggregated data on gender-based violence (GBV) gathered by the Cameroonian Ministry of Justice, covering 2021, described that out of 219 cases of rape brought before the courts, 168 resulted in the sentencing of the perpetrators to prison terms.⁴ A previous version of the report indicated that the Cameroonian authorities recorded 9 292 cases of GBV, and of which 856 referred to cases of rape, in 2020.⁵ Further information on the total number of cases of rape in all of Cameroon could not be found after 2020.

¹ Cameroon, Law 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 relating to the Penal Code, 2016, [url](#)

² USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 35

³ Cameroon, Law 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 relating to the Penal Code, 2016, [url](#)

⁴ Cameroon, Ministry of Justice, Rapport du Ministère de la Justice sur l'état des droits de l'homme au Cameroun en 2021 [Ministry of Justice report on the state of human rights in Cameroon in 2021], February 2023, [url](#), p. 339

⁵ Cameroon, Ministry of Justice, Rapport du Ministère de la Justice sur l'état des droits de l'homme au Cameroun en 2020 [Ministry of Justice report on the state of human rights in Cameroon in 2020], February 2022, [url](#), p. 290



USDOS noted that ‘police and courts rarely investigated or prosecuted rape cases, especially since survivors often did not report them’.⁶ Freedom House, in a report covering 2022, noted that rape was ‘widespread, and perpetrators are rarely prosecuted’.⁷

2. Societal perception of rape victims

Human Rights Watch (HRW) annual report on Cameroon covering 2021, affirmed that ‘discrimination against women is prevalent within Cameroonian society’.⁸ According to a 2023 report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), women are the main victims of GBV, including rape, ‘due to the combined effect of pre-existing cultural and traditional discriminatory norms and practices, gender discrimination and socio-economic vulnerability caused by the crisis [crisis in the Northwest and Southwest]’.⁹

A 2023 qualitative research article which surveyed adolescent victims of sexual violence in the Northwest province of Cameroon, published by the Journal of Global Health Reports, illustrated that rape was ‘not always taken seriously’ and/or ‘not addressed within their communities’.¹⁰ The article described that ‘even mothers’ were ‘dismissive of their daughters’ grievances and reports of being raped’. The article further stated that ‘the legal system in this crisis zone [Northwest region] did not follow-up on the few instances actually reported officially’ and ‘there were no consequences for the perpetrator and no assistance for the victimized adolescent’.¹¹ An NGO stakeholder was quoted in the same article as stating that teenage girls refrained from giving information on being raped or sexually violated because ‘people don’t understand them and so they tend to shy away’.¹²

According to a 2022 report by the International Crisis Group on women in the Anglophone conflict region, ‘almost half’ of the recorded 4,300 cases of sexual and GBV violence in the Anglophone regions between February and December 2020 were rape, even though there was ‘reluctance to report rape due to stigma’.¹³ A 2021 news article by Al Jazeera further affirmed that statistics on sexual and gender-based violent crimes in the Southwest region are ‘likely a severe underestimation’ as ‘crimes go unreported because of fear and social stigma’.¹⁴

A 2021 study on rape in Yaoundé published by the Ethiopian Journal of Reproductive Health (EJRH), stated that 61.4 % of victims of rape sought a medical consultation 72 hours after the incident. The source described that a factor for the delay in seeking medical care was the

⁶ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 35

⁷ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2023 – Cameroon, 2023, [url](#)

⁸ HRW, World Report 2022 – Cameroon, 13 January 2022, [url](#)

⁹ UNOCHA, Cameroon Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, 11 May 2023, [url](#), pp. 30-31

¹⁰ Fonkwo, J. et al., The effect of the anglophone crisis on youth sexual and reproductive health in the Northwest region of Cameroon: a qualitative study, 16 August 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹¹ Fonkwo, J. et al., The effect of the anglophone crisis on youth sexual and reproductive health in the Northwest region of Cameroon: a qualitative study, 16 August 2023, [url](#), p. 5

¹² Fonkwo, J. et al., The effect of the anglophone crisis on youth sexual and reproductive health in the Northwest region of Cameroon: a qualitative study, 16 August 2023, [url](#), p. 6

¹³ International Crisis Group, Rebels, Victims, Peacebuilders: Women in Cameroon’s Anglophone Conflict, 23 February 2022, [url](#), p. 22

¹⁴ Al Jazeera, Sexual violence pervasive in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions, 29 April 2021, [url](#)



‘silent dilemma’ due to being ‘ashamed’ or wanting ‘to preserve family balance especially when the perpetrator is a family member’.¹⁵

According to HRW, 20 women were raped by Cameroonian soldiers in an attack in the Southwest region in March 2020, in which none received medical care in the immediate aftermath, ‘due to a range of obstacles, including displacement, lack of medical facilities, the cost of travel to such facilities, the cost of medical care, and fear of stigma and rejection’.¹⁶

According to a 2018 article by UN Women on reintegration of GBV victims in the Far North region, most cases of sexual assault are not reported because ‘they are committed by soldiers and important men in the community’. The same source added that ‘many women are afraid to denounce sexual assault or file a judicial complaint for rape and sexual assault because of fear of persecution from the society, death threats and abuse of authority by the military officers. Moreover, ‘victims suffer humiliation, stigmatization and isolation from society when they report violence and assault’.¹⁷

3. Reintegration into society of rape victims

Information on reintegration into society of rape victims was scarce among the sources consulted by the EUAA within the time constraints of this query. However, the following information may be relevant.

USDOS stated that the government set up mechanisms such as ‘legal support to survivors via the judiciary network, general clinical care offered in health facilities, and collection of data through the District Health Information System and provision of situational analysis’ to support victims of sexual violence.¹⁸ The same source added that ‘many of the prevention and basic support programs for survivors of gender-based violence were implemented by community-based organizations’.¹⁹ Furthermore, there was no readily provision of emergency contraception for survivors of sexual violence by the government.²⁰

The study published by EJRH, in post-rape consultations in 3 hospitals in Yaoundé, noted that ‘HIV, Hepatitis B, Pregnancy test and Syphilis were the most common workups prescribed in more than half of survivors’ and most victims received psychological support at 85 %.²¹

A July 2022 Situation Report on the Northwest and Southwest region by UNOCHA, stated that humanitarian partners offered GBV interventions to 70,485 persons ‘including GBV awareness-raising, prevention and risk mitigation services for children and women, mental

¹⁵ Fouedjio, JH. et al., Clinical Management of Rape on Yaoundé-Cameroon: A Descriptive Study, October 2021, [url](#), p. 17

¹⁶ HRW, Cameroon: Survivors of Military Assault Await Justice, 26 February 2021, [url](#)

¹⁷ UN Women, Africa, UN Women facilitating reintegration of GBV survivors in the Far North Region of Cameroon, 6 November 2018, [url](#)

¹⁸ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 36

¹⁹ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 36

²⁰ USDOS, 2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Cameroon, 20 March 2023, [url](#), p. 37

²¹ Fouedjio, JH. et al., Clinical Management of Rape on Yaounde-Cameroon: A Descriptive Study, October 2021, [url](#), p. 18



health and psychosocial support, medical assistance including post rape kits, vocational training and economic support for women and girls'.²²

Additional information on access to support services for victims of sexual and gender-based violence can be found in the EUAA Query response, [Sexual and gender-based violence \(SGBV\) against women, including prevalence, legislation, availability of state protection, access to support services, in particular in Yaoundé](#), published on 4 December 2023.

²² UNOCHA, Cameroon: North-West and South-West - Situation Report No. 44, June 2022, [url](#), p. 5

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