

## Disinformation's Threats to Democracy in Central Africa: Case Studies from Cameroon and Central African Republic

**Authors :** Simont Toussi

**Abstract :** Cameroon and the Central African Republic are bound by the provisions of many regional and international charters, which condemn the manipulation of information, obstacles to access reliable information, or the limitation of freedoms of expression and opinion. These two countries also have constitutional guarantees for free speech and access to true and reliable information. However, they are yet to define specific policies and regulations for access to information, disinformation, or misinformation. Yet, certain countries' laws and regulations related to information and communication technologies, to criminal procedures, to terrorism, or intelligence services contain provisions that rather hinder human rights by condemning false information. Like many other African countries, Cameroon and the Central African Republic face a profound democratic regression, and governments use multiple methods to stifle online discourse and digital rights. Despite the increased uptake of digital tools for political participation, there is a lack of interactivity and adoption of these tools. This enables a scarcity of information and creates room for the spreading of disinformation in the public space, hampering democracy and the respect for human rights. This research aims to analyse the adequacy of stakeholders' responses to disinformation in Cameroon and the Central African Republic in periods of political contestation, such as elections and anti-government protests, to highlight the nature, perpetrators, strategies, and channels of disinformation, as well as its effects on democratic actors, including civil society, bloggers, government critics, activists, and other human rights defenders. The study follows a qualitative method with literature review, content analysis, and key informant's interviews with stakeholders' representatives, emphasized crowdsourcing as a data and information collecting method in the two countries.

**Keywords :** disinformation, democracy, political manipulation, social media, media, fake news, central Africa, cameroon, misinformation, free speech

**Conference Title :** ICMFND 2022 : International Conference on Media Manipulation, Fake News and Disinformation

**Conference Location :** Barcelona, Spain

**Conference Dates :** October 20-21, 2022