

MASS MEDIA IN CAMEROON.

PREPARED BY THE
NICO HALLE & Co. LAW FIRM



LAW FIRM ADDRESS:

Nico Halle & Co. Law Firm

B.P.: 4876 Douala

Immeuble Pharmacie Bell

8 Avenue Douala Manga Bell

Face SGBC Bali

Douala – Cameroon.

Tel: +237 33 42 64 79

Fax: +237 33 43 26 34

Hotline: +237 77 53 75 52

Email: hallelaw@hallelaw.com

Web Site: <http://www.hallelaw.com>

IP Department: <http://www.wipnetglobal.com>

Contact Person: Nico Halle, Senior Managing Partner.

MASS MEDIA IN CAMEROON.

Mass media refers to a means of communicating to a large number of people at a time. This can be done via the TV, Radio, Newspapers, etc. Mass media in Cameroon is governed by Law N° 90/52 of 19th December 1990 relating to freedom of mass communication. This law falls under the class of laws referred to as "Liberty Laws" which were promulgated in 1990 guaranteeing certain basic human rights and civil liberties.

Mass media in Cameroon refers to all forms and means of communication which include printing, bookselling, press organs, publishing houses, distribution agencies, bill posting and audio-visual communication establishments (TV and radio). It is important to note here that these laws are very liberal and favour all including those wishing to invest in Cameroon or are already investing in Cameroon. They have been well drafted to protect the interests of all those resident in Cameroon.

With the advent of this law and its liberalisation, Cameroon has witnessed a rapid and drastic growth in the mass media sector. Unlike the lone State-owned Radio and TV Station (CRTV) which used to exist in the country at the time, with the coming into force of this law, Cameroon can now boast of close to 10 TV stations with one State-owned i.e. CRTV and the rest privately-owned stations and more than 20 radio stations. Out of this number one belongs to the State with Regional stations in all the ten Regions of Cameroon and some FM stations for animation in some selected Regions.

In like manner, the number of press organs now present in the country has also witnessed an increase. This is same for publishing houses and distribution agencies. In fact one can say here that the degree of freedom of expression in the country has improved because people can now express their views and have a means through which such views can be expressed. This is done through the number of available private TV and Radio stations existing in the country.

It is also important to state here that though it may sound easy and simple to own a mass media organ in the country, the necessary procedure must be followed for a License of broadcasting or operation to be granted. An application is forwarded to the Minister in charge of communication alongside payment of all the required charges, taxes and stamp duties. Once an applicant fulfils the necessary conditions involved, he would be granted a License to operate a media organ in the country.

Worthy of note too is the fact that Cameroon can now boast of a good number of foreign media organs in the country. A foreign individual can now own a press organ in the country, a publishing house, distribution agency and even an audio-visual communication establishment. He is also free to publish or broadcast in the language he chooses i.e. English or French.

With regards to legal action, a person may bring an action for defamation which may either be libel or slander against a media organ. However, there is a

procedure that must be followed. He must first go by way of a rejoinder. If at the end of the rejoinder the aggrieved party is not satisfied, he can then proceed with the matter to court and claim damages.

Despite the fact that the 1990 laws made mass media liberal in Cameroon, the question one may be tempted to ask is how liberal are these mass media organs in Cameroon. Of course it is true that media organs are liberal in Cameroon but only to a certain degree. For example, press organs are obliged to submit copies of their papers to the various authorities in charge of the jurisdictions in which they find themselves some hours before distribution for scrutiny. This is in a bid to censor the type of information that goes to the public. Their aim is to ensure that the information that goes out to the public favours the regime in power. This act is known as press censorship. In spite of the 1990 laws that gave press freedom, there is some degree of press censorship.

Also in the field of bill posting, it is still State-owned. Posting of all bills especially advertisements on strategic points around the country determined by the State are still controlled and managed by the government. Private individuals do not yet own and control bill posts in the country. As a result, all advertisements and postings must pass through the State and most often it is pretty expensive since it is still monopolised by them.

However, the **Nico Halle & Co. Law Firm** is ever ready to assist you, wishing to invest in the mass media sector in Cameroon or already investing in Cameroon.