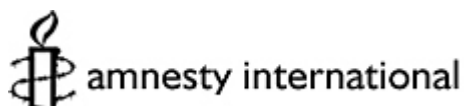


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Amnesty International Report 2009 - Ghana

Head of state and government: John Agyekum Kufuor

Death penalty: abolitionist in practice

Population: 23.9 million

Life expectancy: 59.1 years

Under-5 mortality (m/f): 90/86 per 1,000

Adult literacy: 57.9 per cent

The criminal justice system was slow, prisons were overcrowded and poorly resourced, and no steps were taken to abolish the death penalty. Violence against women continued to be pervasive, despite new laws.

Background

Presidential and parliamentary elections were held on 7 December. After a second round of presidential elections on 28 December, John Evans Atta Mills was declared President-elect. Pre-election violence led to clashes in Tamale (capital of the Northern Region) and Ho (capital of the Volta Region).

At the end of 2008, the Freedom of Information Bill, first introduced in 2002, was still not passed into law.

Criminal justice system

The police often failed to bring suspects before a court within a reasonable time. Some police officers signed remand warrants themselves and took suspects directly to prison.

A Justice for all Programme, initiated in 2007 by the Ministry of Justice and the judiciary to speed up the trials of those remanded in prison, had not had a significant effect by the end of the year.

Prison conditions

Prisons were overcrowded and under-resourced, with poor medical and sanitary facilities and not enough beds or bedding. Many inmates slept on bare floors and were forced to sleep in turns. According to official figures, prisons with a capacity for about 8,000 prisoners were holding approximately 14,000. Almost one third were awaiting trial.

- At the end of 2008, Nsawam Medium Security Prison, built for 800 inmates, incarcerated approximately 3,000 people, more than 60 per cent of whom were awaiting trial. The files of about 300 prisoners awaiting trial were reportedly lost, and another 300 prisoners were still being held after the expiry of their court warrant.

During a visit to Ghana in March 2008, the government refused Amnesty International's request to visit prisons.

Death penalty

No steps were taken to abolish the death penalty. There were 104 prisoners on death row, including three women. In 2008, two men and one woman were sentenced to death. No executions were carried out.

Housing rights

Forced evictions and resulting internal displacement, particularly of marginalized people, continued throughout 2008.

Violence against women and girls

Violence against women continued to be widespread, with violence in the family thought to affect one in three women. The impact of the Domestic Violence Act passed in 2007 had yet to be seen.

Unlawful killings

The media reported several killings of suspected thieves and others during 2008 in "mob violence". According to reports, there were no investigations into these killings.

Amnesty International visits

Amnesty International delegates visited Ghana in March and July.

Amnesty International reports

- Ghana: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review (25 January 2008)
- Ghana: What's happening in the prisons? (1 May 2008)
- Ghana: Review of Ghana under the Universal Periodic Review – Amnesty International's reflections on the outcome (1 June 2008)

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