



Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Ghana – July to December 2024

31 December 2024

22 July 2024

Decision on anti-LGBTIQ law postponed

On 17.07.24, Ghana's Supreme Court postponed a decision on a petition to prevent parliament from sending the controversial anti-LGBTIQ bill to President Nana Akufo-Addo for final approval.

Two lawsuits are currently pending against the adoption of the so-called "Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill", which has been heavily criticised internationally for restricting human rights. The main lawsuit disputes the constitutionality of the law. The second suit seeks an injunction to prevent the Speaker of Parliament, the Attorney General and the Clerk of Parliament from transmitting the bill to President Akufo-Addo for assent.

The Supreme Court declared that it would postpone the decision on the motions for interim injunctions expected for 17.07.24 and instead hold an early hearing on the original main action. In the end, the court wants to issue a joint comprehensive judgement that deals with the aspects of both actions, the court said. The proceedings were adjourned indefinitely. The media assume that the Supreme Court's decision means that the debate about the law, which is dominating political discourse, is to be kept out of the campaign for the presidential elections in December 2024.

The anti-LGBTIQ law passed by the Ghanaian parliament on 28.02.24 (cf. BN of 04.03.24) not only provides for harsher punishment for same-sex sexual acts, but also criminalises the deliberate promotion, encouragement or support of LGBTIQ activities. When the lawsuits were brought before the Supreme Court after parliamentary approval, President Nana Akufo-Addo announced on 05.03.24 that he would not approve the anti-LGBTIQ law until its constitutionality had been confirmed. He said, he wanted to wait until the country's Supreme Court had ruled on the matter (cf. BN of 11.03.24).¹

26 August 2024

Court bans planned protests by Ghanaian youth

On 30.07.24, the High Court in Accra issued an injunction prohibiting several civil society organisations from holding their planned protests. According to media reports, the organisations concerned had planned several events and rallies from 31.07. to 06.08.24, expecting more than 2 million young people to take to the streets of Accra. With the planned protests, Ghana's young generation wanted to air its grievances about the country's problems, such as the high cost of living or corruption, which they feel particularly affected by. They also wanted to demand government transparency.

On 25.07.24, the Ghanaian police filed the application to ban the protests due to security concerns, which the Supreme Court subsequently granted. The police maintained that they lacked the necessary staff to provide

security, as officers had been deployed to political rallies as part of the election campaign. The organising organisations expressed their disappointment at the court's decision. The demonstration was to be a peaceful and constructive platform for dialogue and representation of interests, they said. They now intent to exhaust all legal possibilities to take action against the order.²

30 September 2024

Arrests during protests against illegal mining

The Ghanaian police arrested more than 40 people at a protest in the capital Accra on 21.09.24. The civil society group Democracy Hub had planned a three-day protest to denounce the government's mismanagement. A central issue of the protest was the government's handling of illegal mining in the country.

Widespread illegal mining, also known as "galamsey", poses an increasing threat to the country. The unregulated mining of raw materials, especially gold, is causing considerable environmental pollution and is already polluting around 60 % of the most important water sources. The country's water company has been forced to close some overstretched water treatment plants and ration water in parts of southern Ghana. Experts fear that Ghana will have to import water after the year 2030 if the problem is not tackled more effectively. Although President Nana Akufo-Addo has ordered the deployment of police and military forces to tackle illegal mines, a similar approach in 2017 did not solve the problem. This, among other things, had prompted the protesters to become more active.

According to media reports, the Ghanaian police are accusing some of the protesters of attacking officers during the protest. Democracy Hub in turn accuses the police of staging an attack on peaceful demonstrators. Among those arrested is activist Oliver Barker-Vormawor. He had also helped to organise the protests. Together with eleven other detainees, he was summoned to court on 26.09.24. He pleaded not guilty to the charges of unlawful assembly and assaulting an officer. However, he and the other defendants were denied bail. The detainees will therefore remain in prison for a fortnight before appearing in court again.

Barker-Vormawor is currently being treated in a police hospital. According to his legal counsel, he had already stated on 24.09.24 while in custody that he is seriously ill. However, the police had not provided him with medical care in time. The police have denied these allegations.

On social media, numerous Ghanaians are calling for the release of Barker-Vormawor and the other detainees under #FreeTheYouth and #FreeTheCitizens.

Following increasing demands for the government to intervene quickly in the fight against illegal mining, the Ghanaian government has ordered a nationwide lockdown for 30.09.24.³

14 October 2024

Demonstrations relating to the anti-LGBT bill

At a demonstration in Accra on 08.10.24, hundreds of people called for the anti-LGBT bill to finally become law. The bill was passed by the Ghanaian government on 28.02.24 and must subsequently be ratified by the president (cf. BN of 04.03. and 22.07.24). According to reports in the media, the demonstration was led by a member of the opposition National Democratic Congress party (NDC). Apart from prescribing more severe penalties for homosexual acts, the contentious anti-LGBT bill also criminalises the intentional promotion, facilitation or support of LGBTIQ activities. President Nana Akufo-Addo announced on 05.03.24 that he would not approve the bill until its constitutionality was confirmed, stating that he intended to wait until the country's supreme court had reached a decision on the matter (cf. BN of 11.03.24). Supporters of the bill maintain that Nana Akufo-Addo is bowing to international pressure in order to avoid losses of funding.⁴

Further protests against illegal mining

On 11.10.24 bishops of the archdiocese of Accra protested in Accra together with hundreds of people, including Catholic parishioners and civil-society groups, against illegal gold mining, which is known as "galamsey", and handed in a petition calling for a ban on illegal mining, which they described as a dangerous and environmentally harmful practice.

Thousands of people had previously demonstrated for an end to "galamsey" illegal gold-mining in Accra from 03.10. to 05.10.24. At another demonstration on 21.09.24 which was organised by the civil-society group Democracy Hub, the Ghanaian police arrested more than 40 people in Accra (cf. BN of 30.09.24).

Illegal mining is widespread and constitutes a growing danger for the country. The unregulated mining of natural resources, particularly gold, causes substantial environmental damage and has already contaminated some 60 % of the most important water resources. The national water company has been forced to close a number of water treatment plants which have proven unable to cope with the levels of contamination and has had to ration water in parts of southern Ghana. Experts fear that from 2030 Ghana will have to import water, if the problem is not tackled more effectively. While president Nana Akufo-Addo has ordered the deployment of police and military personnel to take action against illegal mines, a similar attempt in 2017 failed to solve the problem. According to reports in the media, the government is under pressure to act in view of the upcoming presidential elections on 07.12.24.⁵

28 October 2024

President signs off Gender Equality Act

On 19.09.24 president Akufo-Addo signed off the Affirmative Action (Gender Equality) Act 2024, which had been caught up in the legislative process since 1998. The act was passed by the Ghanaian parliament in July 2024. The act is intended to consolidate women's participation in public life by ensuring that they occupy at least 30 % to 50 % of posts, for example in government and business, by 2030. The act also makes verbal attacks, discrimination and intimidation of employees on the basis of their gender punishable offences. It remains to be seen how and whether the act will actually be implemented.⁶

04 November 2024

Parliamentary proceedings suspended after legal dispute

Proceedings in the Ghanaian parliament were suspended on 22.10.24 after an internal legal battle broke out. According to reports in the media, the dispute in parliament resulted from a conflict between MPs of the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the largest opposition party, National Democratic Congress (NDC). Four MPs (three from the NPP and one from the NDC) announced in mid-October 2024 that they intended to run as independent candidates in the forthcoming presidential and parliamentary elections on 07.12.24.

On 17.10.24 the speaker of parliament, himself a member of the NDC, subsequently declared the four parliamentary seats vacant, stating that the law prohibited MPs from changing party during a term in office. This decision overturned the parliamentary majority in NDC's favour.

In the next session of parliament, a row flared up about the official parliamentary majority, which the NDC now claimed to hold. All parliamentary activities were duly suspended.

The governing party accused the speaker of parliament of bias and appealed to the Supreme Court.

On 30.10.24 the Supreme Court in Accra ruled that the speaker of parliament must revoke his decision to declare the four seats vacant. On the basis of the Ghanaian constitution, the Supreme Court declared that it was forbidden for MPs to change party during their term in office, as this would undermine the electorate's trust in MPs and lead to instability in parliament.

Following this ruling by the Supreme Court, the governing NPP party regained its majority in parliament.⁷

25 November 2024

Election preparations; opposition leader ahead in polls

The opinion research institute Global Info Analytics in Accra published poll ratings on the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections on 11.11.24. The poll's findings indicate that Ghana's most important opposition leader, John Dramani Mahama of the National Democratic Congress (NDC), is set to claim a 52 % share of the vote, ahead of the vice-president and presidential candidate of the New Patriotic Party (NPP), Muhamudu Bawumia, with a 41 % share. Mahama was formerly president of the country from 2012 to 2017.

The main issues in this year's elections will be the economy, employment, education and infrastructure. The population is concerned above all about the rising cost of living as a result of continuing inflation. The high unemployment among young people in particular is prompting many of the latter to seek opportunities abroad. Illegal mining and the resultant water contamination recently sparked demonstrations on the streets by thousands of people and this remains a central issue for the elections (cf. BN of 30.09. and 14.10.24).

The presidential and parliamentary elections are planned for 07.12.24. Twelve candidates will be running for the presidency. As in previous elections, only the candidates of the two largest parties, NPP and NDC, have any realistic prospects of winning, however. Ghana is well-known in the region for its firm democracy and its orderly transitions of power.⁸

02 December 2024

Election preparations: Fact-checking collective to combat misinformation

Ahead of the impending presidential and parliamentary elections on 07.12.24, the three fact-checking organisations Fact-Check Ghana, GhanaFact und Dubawa Ghana have formed a joint collective. The declared aim of the newly founded Ghana Fact-Checking Coalition (GFC) is to take more effective action against the propagation of misinformation and to ensure the integrity of the elections. The GFC brings together more than 50 fact checkers spread all over Ghana, who also train media representatives in particular in remote areas and impart an awareness of misinformation issues. Partnerships additionally exist with around 100 media organisations which translate fact-checked news into local languages. Traditional media remain the main source of information for most Ghanaians. The existing coalition of domestic election monitors (CODEC) has also announced that it intends to cooperate with the GFC. The organisations state that the propagation of misinformation is on the increase and poses a substantial threat to democratic processes and their stabilisation.⁹

09 December 2024

Parliamentary and presidential elections: Victory for opposition party NDC

Ghana's announced parliamentary and presidential elections went off largely peacefully on 07.12.24. Initial projections and reports in the media indicate that the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC) party won both the parliamentary and the presidential election. This means that Ghana's former president, John Dramani Mahama (in office from 2012 to 2016) managed to defeat his rival from the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP), Mahamudu Bawumia, who is the current vice-president. The Electoral Commission (EC) has yet to announce any official election results. According to the EC, the vote counting process is being held up due to interference by supporters of both parties. Fighting is reported to have occurred at a number of local counting centres. The EC has requested support from the police. At a press conference on 08.12.24, presidential candidate Bawumia conceded defeat, however, and reported that he had called Mahama to congratulate him. He said he had decided to concede defeat in order to avoid further tensions in the country.¹⁰

16 December 2024

Election result and minor disturbances in the aftermath of the election

On 09.12.24 the Ghanaian electoral commission announced the final result of the presidential elections which were held on 07.12.24 (cf. BN of 09.12.24). John Mahama of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) secured 56.55 % of the vote to win the election ahead of his most important rival, Mahamudu Bawumia, the vice-president and candidate of the governing New Patriotic Party (NPP). Bawumia took 41.01% of votes cast. The electoral commission reported that turnout was some 20 % lower than in the last elections in 2020, at only 60.9 %.

On 11.12.24 the incumbent president, Nana Akufo-Addo, and the future president, Mahama, met in Accra to plan a smooth transition of power. They also introduced the so-called Transition Team at the meeting. The establishment of the Transition Team was stipulated in the Presidential (Transition) Act of 2012, which specifies that the team must be comprised of members of the old government and members of the new president's camp and is to jointly organise the peaceful transition of power. Handover to the new president is planned for 07.01.25.

Mahama has emphasized how important a peaceful transition of power is for Ghana, stressing that despite all the adversities facing the country at present, Ghana must nevertheless remain a beacon of democracy in Africa. While the elections largely went off smoothly, a number of minor disturbances did occur. According to reports in the media, the police arrested a total of 30 people on suspicion of perpetrating violence in the aftermath of the elections. It was apparently not possible to collect the ballot papers in nine constituencies because the counting centres were besieged by party members. This reportedly did not affect the election result in any way, however. In Kasoa (Central Region), civilians clashed violently in a disturbance on the day of the election, in the course of which one person was reportedly shot dead and one person was injured. The police are said to have arrested four suspects in connection with this incident.¹¹

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Briefing Notes
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