



# Briefing Notes Summary

Group 62 – Information Centre for Asylum and Migration

Ghana – July to December 2023

31 December 2023

## 03 July 2023

### **Protests over tax on menstrual products**

On 22.06.2023, activists joined Ghanaian women and girls demonstrating in front of the Parliament in Accra for the abolition of the 20 % import tax and 12.5 % VAT on sanitary towels. According to media reports, protesters tried to storm the Ghanaian parliament but were stopped by security forces.

A petition said that already before the 2020 election the government had promised to abolish the tax. It also said that the high cost would make menstrual products unaffordable for women and girls, leading to girls staying away from school during their period and increasing the risk of hygiene problems among the rural population.

The Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) spoke out against the abolition of the import tax. The association fears that the competitiveness of local manufacturers will be jeopardized.

## 10 July 2023

### **WFP: Food insecurity at a ten-year high**

WFP reported on 07.07.2023 that food insecurity in West and Central Africa is expected to affect more than 47 million people in the lean season from June to August, reaching a ten-year record high. According to the WFP Regional Director for West Africa, the region is at a critical turning point, with violent conflicts from the central Sahel now spilling across the borders, forcing people from their homes and affecting their agriculture and livestock (cf. BN of 19.06.23). Refugees are advancing south to the coastal countries of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo (cf. BN of 26.06.23). With an increase from less than 30,000 people seeking protection and IDPs in January 2023 to 110,000 in June 2023, the number has almost quadrupled in recent months. Togo alone received around 27,000 refugees from Burkina Faso and 32,000 IDPs from the north of the country since the end of 2021. WFP is working with the governments of the four coastal states to provide food to the displaced and the families hosting them. At the same time, experts warn that the crisis will worsen as the WFP has to drastically cut its support in the Sahel region due to lack of funding.

## 17 July 2023

### **Inflation at 42.5%**

On 12.07.23, the Ghanaian statistics office reported a renewed slight increase in the inflation rate to 42.5 % for June 2023. After the highest inflation rate in Ghana in the last two decades of 54.1% had been recorded in December 2022, the figures had fallen slightly. The country is currently living its worst economic crisis in years. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved a three billion USD aid package after the country asked for help when street protests against the rising cost of living broke out in July 2022.

## **24 July 2023**

### **Ruling party speaks out against LGBTIQ**

The leader of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) spoke out strongly against the activities of LGBTIQ persons in the country in a speech on behalf of the party on 16.07.23. According to the speech, the NPP considers itself a supporter of Ghana's long-standing values and traditions and perceives the prevention of the normalisation of LGBTIQ and related behaviours in Ghana as its political mandate. The Ghanaian parliament is currently debating an anti-LGBTIQ law that provides for up to ten years imprisonment for same-sex activities as well as for any advocacy for LGBTIQ.

A female academic had sued Ghana's Speaker of Parliament and Attorney General over the alleged unconstitutionality of the bill. The suit, which sought to prevent parliament from hearing the bill, was dismissed by the Supreme Court on 19.07.23.

The bill entitled "Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill" was introduced to the parliament on 02.08.21. The bill is harshly criticised by human rights organisations (cf. BN of 16.08.21).

## **31 July 2023**

### **Three important human rights laws passed**

According to a parliamentary committee report, the Ghanaian parliament passed three fundamental laws on 25.07.23 which, after the president's approval, will represent a significant step forward in terms of human rights protection. The Criminal Offences Amendment Act provides for the abolition of the death penalty. The Armed Forces Amendment Act will therefore replace the death penalty with life imprisonment.

This makes Ghana the 29th country on the African continent to abolish the death penalty. Until now, capital punishment was mandatory for crimes such as murder. According to the Ghana Prison Service, 176 people were on death row at the end of 2022. However, no execution has been carried out in Ghana since 1993.

The Criminal Offences Amendment Act also prohibits accusations of witchcraft. It outlaws practising as a witch doctor or witchfinder and accusing, designating or labelling another person as a witch and similar things related thereto. According to the MP who introduced the bill, depending on the community in which the accusation is made, an accusation of being a witch can be accompanied by serious human rights violations and can sometimes amount to a de facto death sentence.

## **21 August 2023**

### **Allegations of corruption in the passport procurement system**

According to media reports, on 14.08.23 the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration denounced the deep-rooted corruption in the passport procurement system. After an unannounced visit to the passport office, corrupt activities by passport officers in collaboration with employees of the police service, immigration, national security and outside middlemen, so-called "Goro Boys", had been uncovered. This is exactly what the extensive digitisation of the passport acquisition system in 2016 was meant to prevent, the report said, but the officials went on to manipulate the online application system to their advantage. As a result, the minister dismissed some officials from service and launched further investigations.

## **25 September 2023**

### **Arrests during several days of protests over economic crisis**

On 21.09.23, police officers from the Ghana Police Service in Accra arrested 49 protesters at the announced Occupy Jubilee House demonstration (namely #OccupyJubileeHouse). According to media reports, hundreds of people followed a call by the group Democracy Hub to meet at a bus station and then proceeded to Jubilee House, the seat of the Ghanaian government. In front of the seat of government, Democracy Hub intended to protest against the high cost of living, economic mismanagement and corruption problems in the government, the reports said. Ghana is currently facing its worst economic crisis in years (cf. BN of 17.07.23). However, the police stopped the protest march on the way and bussed the 49 arrested people to the regional police headquarters.

On the two following days, hundreds of people gathered again to continue the protests under the supervision of riot police.

According to Democracy Hub, the group had previously notified the authorities of the protests planned from 21.09 to 23.09.23. The Ghana Police Service had then appealed to the court to obtain an injunction against the protest and justified the subsequent arrests on the grounds of non-compliance with this injunction.

Democracy Hub, on the other hand, says it did not receive a court order to this effect in the run-up to the planned protests.

Several national organisations and parties, including Amnesty International Ghana and the major opposition party National Democratic Congress (NDC), condemn the arrests and alleged police violence and brutality.

At a meeting between police and Democracy Hub leaders on 22.09.23, the authorities said they had no reports of police violence in their files on the demonstration and would require evidence from the public to launch possible investigations.

In a statement released on 24.09.23 by the Ghana Police Service, the Deputy Commissioner of Police apologized. He said the Ghana Police Service had in the past provided security for protesters and wanted to continue to do so within the law and promote a democratic environment.

## **23 October 2023**

### **Flooding after opening of dams leaves thousands homeless**

It has been reported in the media that some 27,000 people have lost their homes, their livelihoods and farming land in the wake of floods in the Volta region in the south-east of Ghana. The floodgates of the Akosombo and Kpong dams in the Eastern Region were opened after heavy rainfall. The responsible Volta River Authority (VRA) reportedly began controlled opening on 15.09.23 and rejects accusations that the water was released too quickly and that it failed to inform the population adequately.

While no casualties are known as yet, the people who have been driven from their homes and are now sheltered in emergency accommodation are in urgent need of assistance. The VRA, the national disaster management organisation and regional authorities are apparently working together to rescue more people and are initiating emergency measures.

While this is not the first time that the dams have been opened after heavy rainfall, the Ghanaian institute for meteorology (GMet) cites this year's unusually heavy rainfall in a number of Sahel countries and in the north-east of Ghana as a possible reason for the disaster.

## **06 November 2023**

### **Ruling party elects presidential candidate**

On 04.11.23 the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) chose its candidate for the presidential and parliamentary elections which are scheduled for December 2024. According to reports in the media, Mahamudu Bawumia won the preliminary elections as expected, claiming 61 % of the vote. During president Nana Akufo-Addo's current tenure, Bawumia - an economist and former vice-governor of the Ghanaian central bank - has served not only as vice-president but also head of the economic management team. Bawumia stated at a press conference that if elected as president he would apply his expertise to lead the country out of the current economic crisis (cf. BN of 17.07.23). He will run in December 2024 against John Mahama, candidate of the main opposition party, the National Democratic Congress (NDC), who served as president of Ghana from 2012 to 2017 (cf. BN of 22.05.23).

## **27 November 2023**

### **Ethnically motivated clashes claim a number of lives**

Violent clashes occurred between members of the Jaabu and Forboru ethnic groups in the town of Wanchiki in Chereponi district (North East region) on 20.11.23. According to the most recent media reports, at least seven people have been killed and a number injured as a result of exchanges of fire and cases of arson on a number of houses. The incident was reportedly sparked by an attack on a traditional Wanchiki chief. A number of people are reported to have fled to the district capital, Chereponi, or over the nearby border into Togo. The situation is said to have since been de-escalated with the support of the security services.

On the night of 20.11.23 disputes between the Adele, Challa and Akyode ethnic groups escalated into violence once again in Nkwanta township. According to reports in the media, it has since been confirmed that eight people were killed and a number injured. Exchanges of fire, arson and looting are also said to have occurred in Nkwanta. Many people reportedly left the town out of fear. The conflict between the ethnic groups is reported to have been smouldering for some time as a result of disputes over land ownership. The most recent outbreaks occurred against the backdrop of a traditional harvest festival (Yam festival). The interior ministry subsequently imposed a curfew for the night of 21.11.23. Police patrols and an increased military presence are reportedly on deployment in the area to stabilise the situation.

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