



Amnesty International Report 2017/18 - Ghana

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Republic of Ghana

Head of state and government: **Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo (replaced John Dramani Mahama in January)**

Concerns were raised around unfair trials and poor prison conditions for people on death row, as well as the shackling of people with psychosocial disabilities. LGBTI people continued to face discrimination, violence and police harassment.

BACKGROUND

Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party was inaugurated as President in January, following presidential and parliamentary elections in December 2016.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In July, Ghana signed the AU Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection, and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

On 23 March, Ghana ratified the UN Minamata Convention on Mercury, which aims to protect workers from toxic liquid metal by reducing mercury use in artisanal and small-scale gold mining and protecting children from exposure. About 1 million people were working in Ghana's gold mines, and nearby communities were often directly exposed to mercury. In April, the government began a campaign to end illegal small-scale gold mining (known as "galamsey"), the negative impacts of which include increased crime, lost revenues and environmental damage as well as encouraging hazardous child labour. The government launched a five-year project to provide illegal miners with alternative livelihoods in the legal mining sector. More than 300 people were arrested on suspicion of illegal gold mining; one person was shot dead by police during the arrests. No official report concerning the death had been released by the end of the year.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

In May the Minister for Gender, Children and Social Protection launched a strategy for 2017-2026 to address the issue of child marriage. Some regions were disproportionately affected by child marriage; 34% of girls in northern Ghana were married before the age of 18. The strategy included accelerating access to quality education and sexual and reproductive health information and services, as well as enforcing the existing legal and policy frameworks in relation to child marriage.

DEATH PENALTY

Scores of people on death row, including six officially considered to have mental and intellectual disabilities, faced poor prison conditions. Inmates experienced overcrowding and lack of access to health care and educational and recreational facilities.

Many death row inmates reported that they had not received adequate legal representation at their trials. Fewer than one in four death row inmates interviewed by Amnesty International had been able to appeal against their conviction or sentence. Few inmates interviewed were aware of how to appeal or access legal aid, while most were unable to pay for private lawyers. The Ghana Prison Service reported that only 12 death row inmates had filed appeals since 2006 – half of which were successful.[1] Proposals made by the Constitutional Review Implementation Committee to abolish the death penalty continued to be stalled as a result of delays in the constitutional review process.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Access to justice remained limited, especially for people from low income or marginalized backgrounds. The Ghana Legal Aid Scheme suffered from funding shortages; just 23 lawyers offering legal aid were available to the country's population of more than 28 million people.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

Shackling of people with psychosocial disabilities remained common, particularly in private "prayer camps" across the country. The practice involved restraining a person using chains or ropes and locking them in a confined space such as a room, shed or cage. In June the Mental Health Authority of Ghana released 16 people, including two girls, held in shackles at Nyakumasi Prayer Camp, a "spiritual healing centre" in the Central Region. Those freed, some of whom had mental health conditions, were taken to nearby Ankaful Psychiatric Hospital. A coalition of civil society organizations called on the government to adopt and enforce a ban on shackling and to invest in appropriate community-based services to support people with mental health conditions. They also called on the government to fully implement the Mental Health Act 2012, which, among other things, required the establishment of regional mental health committees responsible for monitoring mental health facilities across the country. Funding for mental health services remained lacking.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

Consensual same-sex sexual relations between men remained a criminal offence. LGBTI people continued to face discrimination, violence and police harassment as well as extortion attempts by members of the public. In February the Speaker of Parliament stated in the media that the Constitution should be amended to make homosexuality completely illegal and punishable by law. In July he also stated in the media that Ghana would not decriminalize homosexuality as this could lead to bestiality and incest becoming legalized.

[1] Locked up and forgotten: The need to abolish the death penalty in Ghana ([ACT 50/6268/2017](#))

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