

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	72
Land:	Ghana
Kilde:	Freedom House
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Ghana (2006)

Polity:

No polity available

Political Rights:

1

Civil Liberties:

2

Status:

Free

Population:

22,000,000

GNI/Capita:

\$320

Life Expectancy:

58

Religious Groups:

Indigenous beliefs (21 percent), Muslim (16 percent), Christian (63 percent)

Ethnic Groups:

Akan (44 percent), Moshi-Dagomba (16 percent), Ewe (13 percent), Ga (8 percent), other (19 percent)

Capital:

Accra

Additional Info:

[Freedom in the World 2005](#)

[Freedom of the Press 2005](#)

[Nations in Transit 2004](#)

[Countries at the Crossroads 2005](#)

Ratings Change

Ghana's rating for political rights improved from 2 to 1 due to fair and competitive presidential and parliamentary elections and a general maturing of the country's electoral institutions.

Overview

President John Kufuor won a second four-year term in December 2004 elections that bolstered Ghana's reputation as a stable democracy. The ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) maintained its majority in concurrent parliamentary elections. A strike by doctors demanding back payment for overtime work in September 2005 crippled hospitals across the country.

Once a major slaving center and long known as the Gold Coast, Ghana, a former British possession, became black Africa's first colony to achieve independence in 1957. After the 1966 overthrow of its charismatic independence leader, Kwame Nkrumah, the country was wracked by a series of military coups for 15 years. Successive military and civilian governments vied with each other in both incompetence and deception.

In 1979, Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings led a coup against the ruling military junta and, as promised, returned power to a civilian government after a purge of corrupt senior army officers. However, the new civilian administration did not live up to Rawlings's expectations, and he seized power again in December 1981 and set up the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC). The radically socialist, populist, and brutally repressive PNDC junta banned political parties and free expression. Facing a crumbling economy, Rawlings, in the late 1980s, transformed Ghana into an early model for the

structural adjustment programs urged by international lenders. A new constitution adopted in April 1992 legalized political parties; Rawlings was declared president after elections that were neither free nor fair.

The December 1996 presidential and parliamentary elections conducted under the 1992 constitution allowed Ghanaians their first opportunity since independence to choose their representatives in genuine elections. Rawlings's victory in the 1996 presidential poll, which was generally regarded as free and fair, was assured by the then-ruling party's extensive use of state media and patronage, as well as by opposition disunity.

The 2000 presidential and parliamentary polls were hailed in Africa and abroad

as a successful test of Ghana's democracy. The presidential poll marked the first time in Ghana's history that one democratically elected president was succeeded by another. The opposition, led by John Kufuor and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), alleged intimidation and other irregularities as the second round of voting began. However, those claims dissipated as the polling proceeded and Kufuor's looming victory became apparent. He won soundly with 57 percent of the vote in the second round of polling, compared with 43 percent for John Atta Mills, who was vice president under Rawlings. The elections were hailed as having been conducted both freely and fairly. During concurrent legislative polls, the opposition also broke the stranglehold of Rawlings's National Democratic Congress (NDC) on parliament.

In the December 2004 presidential elections, Kufuor won 53 percent of the vote, followed by Atta Mills with 44 percent. The two other presidential candidates, Edward Mahama of the Grand Coalition (GC) and George Aggudey of the Convention People's Party (CPP), won less than 2 percent each. Mills and his party alleged irregularities and called for a vote recount, but the Electoral Commission turned down the request.

In concurrent legislative elections, in which candidates from eight parties contested 230 seats for parliament, the NPP maintained its majority. The NPP won 128 seats followed by 94 seats for the NDC, 4 for the GC, and 3 for the CPP. A coalition of civil society groups-the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers-deployed thousands of monitors across the country for both polls. Some sporadic violence was reported, as well as a few incidents of intimidation and some irregularities, but domestic and international observers judged the elections generally free and fair.

Driven by high global prices for cocoa and gold, two of Ghana's main exports, the country's growth rate has exceeded 5 percent. The reputation of the Kufuor government for good governance has won aid from Western donors. Ghana qualified in 2004 for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, which will slash the country's \$6 billion external debt in half over 20 years and reduce debt service payments each year. Japan has cancelled Ghana's \$1 billion debt to Tokyo. Ghana's government in 2005 cut back on oil subsidies by raising consumer fuel prices by 50 percent.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Citizens of Ghana can change their government democratically. The December 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections were considered generally fair and competitive. The president and vice president are elected on the same ticket by popular vote for four-year terms. Members of Ghana's unicameral 230-seat parliament are elected for four-year terms.

The government of President Kufuor has made efforts to improve transparency and reduce corruption, but graft remains a widespread problem. Ghana was ranked 65 out of 159 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2005 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Freedom of expression is constitutionally guaranteed and generally respected. Numerous private radio stations operate, and several independent newspapers and magazines are published in Accra. State media outlets sometimes criticize government policies but avoid direct criticism of the president. Fulfilling a campaign promise, the Kufuor government repealed Ghana's criminal libel law and otherwise eased pressure on the press in 2001. Internet access is unrestricted.

Religious freedom is respected, and the government has increased its prosecution of perpetrators of religious violence. Academic freedom is guaranteed and respected. A ban on campus demonstrations has not been enforced or challenged.

The right to peaceful assembly and association is constitutionally guaranteed, and permits are not required for meetings or demonstrations. Numerous nongovernmental organizations operate openly and freely.

Under 2003 labor laws that conform with International Labor Organization (ILO) conventions, every worker has the right to form or join a trade union. About 20 percent of the workforce is employed in the formal sector. A national labor commission, which is composed of government, employer, and organized labor representatives, was created to help resolve labor disputes, first through mediation and then through arbitration; Kufuor set up the commission in 2003 to improve worker-employer relations.

A strike by doctors demanding back payment for overtime work in September 2005 crippled hospitals across the country. The government said the strike was illegal because of a law banning health and essential services workers from striking.

Ghanaian courts have acted with increased autonomy under the 1992 constitution, but corruption remains a problem. A parliamentary committee on judicial corruption has recommended establishing and enforcing codes of conduct, disciplinary mechanisms, and transparent complaint procedures. Traditional courts often handle minor cases according to local customs that fail to meet constitutional standards. Scarce judicial resources compromise the judicial process, leading to long periods of pretrial detention under harsh conditions.

Members of the police force were responsible for several deaths in 2005, and there were credible allegations that police beat and abused suspects, prisoners, and demonstrators. While the government has taken steps to improve prisons, conditions are very harsh and sometimes life threatening; prisons are overcrowded and do not provide prisoners with adequate nutrition or medical care. Security forces manning checkpoints to catch criminals and seize weapons occasionally solicited bribes from motorists.

Ghana's National Reconciliation Commission finished hearing testimony from more than 2,000 people in 2004. The reconciliation panel was based on South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. While the hearings covered all of

Ghana's history since independence, much of the focus was on the early years of rule under Rawlings in the 1980s. The proceedings were seen as a test of the flexibility of the country's democracy and of how well Ghana could look into its past, acknowledge its failings, and continue to move democratically into the future.

Communal and ethnic violence occasionally flares in Ghana. In 2005, Ghana hosted more than 15,000 refugees from who fled their country when violence broke out following disputed presidential elections in April.

Despite women's equal rights under the law, Ghanaian women suffer societal discrimination that is particularly serious in rural areas, where opportunities for education and wage employment are limited. Women's enrollment in universities, however, is increasing. Domestic violence against women is said to be common but often remains unreported. Legislation in 1998 doubled the prison sentence for rape. Female genital mutilation (FGM) was made illegal in Ghana in 1994, and those who perform the operation face a prison sentence of at least three years. In January 2004, an elderly woman was sentenced to prison for five years for performing FGM. Ghana has been coordinating with regional countries and the ILO to create a comprehensive plan to address the growing problems of child trafficking and child labor.