



Amnesty International Annual Report 2013 - Ghana

Publisher [Amnesty International](http://www.refworld.org/docid/519f519c18.html)

Publication Date 23 May 2013

Cite as Amnesty International, *Amnesty International Annual Report 2013 - Ghana*, 23 May 2013, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/519f519c18.html> [accessed 11 June 2013]

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Head of state and government: **John Dramani Mahama (replaced John Evans Atta Mills in December)**

Over 1,000 people were forcibly evicted from their homes in the capital, Accra. Thousands more remained at risk of forced eviction. Violence continued against people suspected of same-sex relationships, who still had little or no legal protection. There were no executions. The death penalty was still on the statute books, despite the government having accepted recommendations to abolish it. The criminal justice system remained slow.

Background

President John Atta Mills died in July. His deputy, John Dramani Mahama, was immediately sworn in as President. General elections were held in December 2012 and John Dramani Mahama was declared the winner. In June, the government published its White Paper in response to the Constitutional Review Commission's (CRC) final report. The government did not publish the final report itself. By the end of the year, the Freedom of Information bill had not become law.

Justice system

Court procedures were long and slow. Access to legal aid was limited or non-existent and some prisoners spent years waiting to be tried. Prisons were overcrowded and failed to provide inmates with basic services, including medical care. In March, 200 prisoners were transferred to the maximum security Ankaful prison in an attempt to address overcrowding.

Death penalty

Twenty-seven men were sentenced to death. At the year's end, 166 people were on death row, including four women. No executions were carried out. In June, the government accepted the CRC's recommendation to abolish the death penalty. However, the death penalty remained on the statute books at the end of 2012.

Housing rights

In January 2012, the Accra Metropolitan Authority demolished around 500 houses and structures along Accra's railway line. One estimate suggested that over 1,500 people were left homeless. They were only given three days' notice to leave their communities, and were offered no compensation or alternative accommodation. Thousands more continued to be at risk of forced eviction.

Violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls remained rife, with nearly 10,000 cases reported to the Ghana police Domestic Violence Support Unit in 2012. Violence against women was thought to be under-reported, and not adequately addressed by the authorities.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

Sexual activity between consenting adults of the same sex remained a crime under Ghana's Criminal Code. Violence against people suspected of same-sex relationships continued. In March 2012, young people in Accra's James Town community disrupted a planned wedding ceremony between two women, and assaulted them and their guests. The women were later arrested and detained at the James Town Police station for "engaging in illegal practice". They were released after their relatives intervened.

The CRC's final report recommended that the country's Supreme Court should rule on whether Ghana should legalise same-sex acts. The government "took note" of the recommendation.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

In June, the Ghana Refugee Board announced plans to close the Buduburam refugee camp in Accra. It said an estimated 11,000 Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees were being registered for repatriation to their respective countries.

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