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The State of the World's Human Rights; Ghana 2025

Attacks against journalists continued. Female genital mutilation continued to be practised, while accusations of witchcraft still threatened women's rights to life and health. The reintroduction of a bill to promote "family values" threatened to further criminalize LGBTI people. Refugee status was granted immediately to forcibly displaced Burkinabe asylum seekers. The health sector was seriously hit by USAID cuts as the country faced disease outbreaks. Efforts were made to fight illegal mining, encourage reforestation and combat illegal fishing.

Background

In January, following parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2024, John Dramani Mahama returned to office as president, with the National Democratic Congress back in power.

The president pardoned nearly 1,000 prisoners in a bid to reduce prison overcrowding.

The Constitutional Review Committee continued its work to identify gaps in previous constitutional reforms and recommend amendments to improve Ghana's constitutional framework.

Freedom of expression and assembly

In January, the Attorney General dropped charges that had been brought against members of civil society group Democracy Hub after they participated in a protest against illegal mining in September 2024. In February, journalists' associations called on the police to investigate an attack by unidentified men on a journalist reporting on an illegal mining operation. In the same month, international NGO the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called for an investigation into attacks by

unidentified men on five journalists covering the elections in the Ashanti region.

In April, the CPJ called on the president to deliver justice for the 2019 murder of the journalist Ahmed Hussein-Suale Divela and to reform laws criminalizing “false news”. Three journalists were assaulted during local elections in July. Police officers were involved in two of these attacks; one police officer was suspended and charged in connection with one of the incidents.

Women’s and girls’ rights

Female genital mutilation (FGM) continued to be practised, especially in the Upper East, Upper West and Bono regions. The Ghana Statistical Service announced new plans to use citizen-generated data as well as traditional statistical surveys to obtain more accurate and timely information on FGM, especially in remote regions.

Following its reintroduction to parliament in March, a bill criminalizing accusations of witchcraft and related abuses had still not been passed at the end of the year. Women accused of witchcraft continued to suffer threats, physical attacks and even death. Many had no safe place to go to other than camps in the northern and north-east regions of Ghana. Although these camps offered shelter to women in need of refuge, the government continued its failure to ensure that they provided access to adequate food, safe housing, clean water and health services.¹

LGBTI people’s rights

In March, lawmakers reintroduced the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values bill into parliament. This would further criminalize same-sex relationships and target people with diverse gender identities, imposing prison terms for those who identified as LGBTI. The bill had been passed in parliament in 2024 but lapsed after the then president Nana Akufo-Addo declined to sign it before leaving office. By the end of the year, the bill had still not been passed by parliament.

Refugees’ and migrants’ rights

UNHCR welcomed Ghana’s decision to provide prima facie refugee status to Burkinabe asylum seekers fleeing armed conflict in their country.

Ghana agreed to accept West African deportees from the US. However, at least eight such deportees were reported to have secretly been transferred from Ghana to Togo and left without documentation or support.

Right to health

Ghana continued to strengthen its health emergency preparedness, working in conjunction with the WHO. At the government's request, the WHO provided technical support for an external evaluation of the strength of the country's health security, described by the WHO as "a significant milestone in the country's efforts to enhance health security".

In January, a joint multi-sectoral Public Health Emergency Rapid Response Team, created to contain outbreaks in their early stages, was activated at the start of a fast-escalating outbreak of cholera; 948 new cases were reported in the first three weeks of the year and 50 deaths by February. The response efforts were bolstered by a vaccination campaign which had begun in late 2024, as well as improved sanitation and prevention work. In October, the WHO announced that the government had contained the outbreak.

In February, following cuts to US foreign aid, Ghana was left facing a USD 156 million funding shortfall, with health sector income reduced by USD 78.2 million. USAID had provided essential resources for maternal and child health, disease prevention, and rural healthcare access. In March, the government moved to fill the funding gap by uncapping the proportion of its revenues to be spent on the National Health Insurance Scheme.

In December, the Ghana Health Service confirmed 947 cases of the Mpox disease, and six Mpox-related deaths.

Right to a healthy environment

Mass deforestation and other land degradation caused by illegal mining and logging continued to threaten the environment, as well as the cocoa and shea nut industries. In March, the government launched an initiative to help restore degraded landscapes and improve forest management. In July, the government confirmed its commitment to fight illegal mining, which continued to contaminate and degrade land and water resources. The government announced that at least 1,486 illegal miners had been arrested since January and machinery used for illegal mining operations seized.

In April, Ghana launched the largest floating solar project in West Africa, aimed at increasing the country's share of renewable energy to 10% by 2030.

Economic and social rights

In April, the government endorsed the Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency to combat illegal fishing and overfishing. In August, the

president signed the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act. The new act aimed to strengthen artisanal fishing and counter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by, in part, increasing the inshore exclusion zone.

1. [*Ghana: Branded for Life: How Witchcraft Accusations Lead to Human Rights Violations of Hundreds of Women in North Ghana*, 14 April ↩](#)

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