



Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié du Canada



The UN Refugee Agency

Ghana: Availability of fraudulent identity documents, including instances of officials issuing fraudulent documents, including passports (2008-2013)

Publisher [Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada](#)

Publication
Date 3 January 2014

Citation /
Document
Symbol GHA104710.E

Related
Document(s) [Ghana : information sur la disponibilité des fausses pièces d'identité, y compris les cas où des fonctionnaires délivrent de faux documents, dont des passeports \(2008-2013\)](#)

Cite as Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, *Ghana: Availability of fraudulent identity documents, including instances of officials issuing fraudulent documents, including passports (2008-2013)*, 3 January 2014, GHA104710.E, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/54294bcd4.html> [accessed 21 January 2019]

Disclaimer This is not a UNHCR publication. UNHCR is not responsible for, nor does it necessarily endorse, its content. Any views expressed are solely those of the author or publisher and do not necessarily reflect those of UNHCR, the United Nations or its Member States.

1. Fraudulent Documents and Corruption

The Transparency International (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index for 2013 ranks Ghana 63rd out of 177 countries and gives Ghana a score of 46 out of 100 (TI 2013). Transparency International ranks countries according to relative corruption of their public sector and countries' scores indicate the level of perceived public sector corruption on a scale from 0 ("highly corrupt") to 100 ("very clean") (ibid.). Freedom House reports that corruption in Ghana is "widespread ... stemming in part from the poor remuneration of public employees" (2012, 10). The US Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012 similarly states that "some officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices" (19 Apr. 2013, 11).

According to the Embassy of the United States in Accra, "there are many forged official looking documents" in Ghana (US n.d.). AllAfrica also reports in an April 2013 article that, according to the Ghana Immigration Service (GIS), forging of documents is widespread in Ghana (22 Apr. 2013). Technology Banker, a London-based magazine focusing on banking and finance technology in Africa (Technology Banker n.d.), notes that the following types of fraud were identified by Ghanaian police as prevalent: forgery of documents, identity theft, data theft and cheque fraud, among others (ibid. 13 Feb. 2012).

The state-run Ghana News Agency (GNA) (n.d.) reports that, according to the Director of the GIS, there were 3,876 cases of fraudulent documents reported between 2008 and 2010 at the Kotoka International Airport (KIA) (GNA 23 Nov. 2011). The GIS Annual Report for 2008 indicates that, according to the data received from KIA, 486 fraudulent documents were intercepted in 2008 (Ghana 19 Feb. 2009, 26), of which:

[p]hoto substitution recorded the highest figure with 25.72%, followed by Counterfeit page 15.84%, Impersonation 14.61%, Fraudulent Acquisition of passport 12.76%, Fraudulent Acquisition of Visa 7.16%, False endorsement 5.76%, Counterfeit passport 4.73%, Page Alteration 3.91%, Page substitution 3.70%, Fraudulent Acquisition of Resident Card 2.26%, Counterfeit Sorgomnor / Resident Card 1.85% and Proxy Visa 1.23%. (ibid., 8)

According to the GIS 2010 Annual Report, 390 fraudulent documents were intercepted at KIA in 2010 (ibid. 2010, 13). The report indicates that, of the documents intercepted in 2010, the following were detected: photo substitution (24%), page substitution (6%), page alteration (5%), counterfeit pages (8%), counterfeit passports (8%), counterfeit resident cards (5%) and fake visas (15%), among others (ibid.).

In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a representative of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) National Document Centre indicated that reports received by CBSA "describe Ghanaian documents used fraudulently outside of Ghana" (Canada 27 Dec. 2013). Without providing details, the representative noted that most of the reports mention fraudulent use of the Ghanaian passport (ibid.). Ghana Web, an Amsterdam-based news agency, reports that "'connection men' have been facilitating the acquisition of [Ghanaian] passports," which can reportedly be obtained through them within three hours (Ghana Web 20 Sept. 2013). The Ghanaian minister of Foreign Affairs noted that there are "no instant passport[s] Passports are processed and issued to applicants after three months of submission when all necessary requirements are met" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

2. Legislation

Section 158 of the Ghana Criminal Code states that "[w]hoever, with intent to deceive any person, forges any judicial or official document, shall be guilty of second degree felony" (Ghana 1960, Sec. 158). According to Section 159 of the Criminal Code,

[w]hoever forges any document whatsoever, with intent to defraud or injure any person, or with intent to evade the requirements of the law, or with intent to commit, or to facilitate the commission of, any crime, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour. (ibid., Sec. 159)

Sections 165 and 166 of the Code state the following:

Section 165-Being in Possession of means of Forging.

Whoever without lawful excuse, the proof whereof shall lie on him, has in his possession any instrument or thing specially contrived or adapted for purposes of forgery shall be guilty of a misdemeanour.

Section 166-Possessing Forged Document, etc.

Whoever, with any of the intents mentioned in this Chapter, has in his possession any document or stamp, which is forged, counterfeited, or falsified, or which he knows not to be genuine, shall be liable to the like punishment as if he had, with that intent forged, counterfeited, or falsified the document or stamp. (Ghana 1960)

3. State Efforts to Eliminate the Production and Distribution of Fraudulent Identity Documents

GNA reported in 2010 that, in order to eliminate document fraud, Ghana opened the Document Fraud Expertise Center designed to "contribute to the reduction of fraudulent deals and protect the identity and integrity of official documents originating from Ghana" (17 June 2010). Daily Guide, an Accra-based newspaper, reported in a 2012 article that the Document Fraud Expertise Center detected 498 fraudulent documents referred to the centre by airline operators and foreign missions in Ghana (Daily Guide 27 Jan. 2012). In 2011, the centre had approximately 200 cases of fraudulent documents referred to it by foreign missions (*ibid.*). According to Daily Guide, fraudulent passports and visas were also forwarded to the centre by a number of airlines in 2011 (*ibid.*). The centre facilitated the prosecution of 21 cases to date, but according to a Deputy Superintendent of Immigration, "the penalties have not been punitive enough" (*ibid.*). He further noted that the courts "treat it as misdemeanour" and because penalties are small, the suspects "pay and do it again" (*ibid.*). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

According to a 2013 press release of the Embassy of France in Ghana, four employees of the Document Fraud Expertise Center participated in a two-day training session on the techniques of documentary fraud detection held at the Embassy of the European Union (EU) in Accra and funded by the EU (France 3 Oct. 2013). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

TV3 Network, a private television broadcaster in Ghana (n.d.), reports that, in February 2013, officials of the GIS arrested 27 Ghanaians in connection with forged seaman pass books (TV3 Network [2013]). A press release of the GIS similarly states that 27 Ghanaians holding forged seaman pass books were arrested by the Immigration Service (Ghana [2013]). According to sources, suspects were later granted bail (TV3 Network [2013]; Ghana [2013]) and "investigations [were] still ongoing" (*ibid.*). Further information on the investigation could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

GNA reports that, in August 2013, six Nigerians living in Ghana were charged by an Accra circuit court in connection with "various offences ranging from impersonation, forgery of document, possession of forged documents, conspiracy to commit crime and defrauding by false pretences"

(GNA 7 Aug. 2013). According to GNA, one of the accused forged Ghanaian government documents, a UN Security Department Appointment permit, a Ghana Bar Association document and an IRS Tax Clearance certificate, among others (ibid.). All the suspects pleaded not guilty and were scheduled to appear in court on 21 August 2013 (ibid.). Further and corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

AllAfrica. 22 April 2013. Fatima Adam. "Immigration Service to Deal With Migrant Smuggling." (Factiva)

Canada. 27 December 2013. Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), National Document Centre. Correspondence from a representative to the Research Directorate.

Daily Guide [Accra]. 27 January 2012. "498 Fake Travel Documents Intercepted." [Accessed 10 Dec. 2013]

France. 3 October 2013. Embassy of France, Accra. "Training to the Fight Against Documentary Fraud." [Accessed 16 Dec. 2013]

Freedom House. 2012. "Ghana." Countries at the Crossroads 2012. [Accessed 23 Dec. 2013]

Ghana. [2013]. Ghana Immigration Service (GIS). "Forged Ghanaian Seaman Pass Books." [Accessed 20 Dec. 2013]

_____. 2010. Ghana Immigration Service (GIS). 2010 Annual Report: Analyses of Immigration Form 14 Data from All the Approved Entry / Exit Points. [Accessed 10 Dec. 2013]

_____. 19 February 2009. Ghana Immigration Service (GIS). Annual Report for 2008: Analysis of Immigration Data. [Accessed 10 Dec. 2013]

_____. 1960. Criminal Code, 1960 (Act 29). [Accessed 20 Dec. 2013]

Ghana News Agency (GNA). 7 August 2013. "Six Nigerians in Court for Fraud." [Accessed 3 Dec. 2012]

_____. 23 November 2011. "Ghana Immigration Service Recorded 3876 Cases of Document Fraud Recorded Between 2008 and 2010." [Accessed 16 Dec. 2013]

_____. 17 June 2010. "Ghana Opens Ultra-Modern Document Fraud Detection Centre." [Accessed 12 Dec. 2013]

_____. N.d. "About Ghana News Agency." [Accessed 2 Jan. 2014]

Ghana Web. 20 September 2013. "Beware of Instant Passports - Foreign Minister." [Accessed 10 Dec. 2013]

Technology Banker. 13 February 2012. "Fraud Solutions for Africa Banks - a Ghanaian Perspective." [Accessed 20 Dec. 2013]

_____. N.d. "Who We Are." [Accessed 20 Dec. 2013]

Transparency International (TI). 2013. "Corruption Perceptions Index 2013." [Accessed 19 Dec. 2013]

TV3 Network. [2013]. "27 Ghanaians Arrested for Forged Seaman Books." [Accessed 20 Dec. 2013]

_____. N.d. "About Us." [Accessed 24 Dec. 2013]

United States (US). 19 April 2013. Department of State. "Ghana." Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012. [Accessed 20 Dec. 2013]

_____. N.d. Embassy of the United States, Accra. "Internet Fraud '419' Scams." [Accessed 3 Dec. 2013]

Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact the following organizations were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response: Ghana Consulate General in New York, Ghana Consulate General in Vancouver, Ghana High Commission in Ottawa, Ghana Immigration Service.

Internet sites, including: Africa Confidential; Amnesty International; Cambridge University Press; ecoi.net; Factiva; The Ghanaian Chronicle; Ghana - Government of Ghana Official Portal, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, Ministry of Interior, National Communications Authority, Parliament of Ghana, Services Portal of the government; Ghana Business News; International Organization for Migration; Interpol Ghana; Keesing Reference Systems; Modern Ghana; The New Statesman; TV Africa; United Nations - Refworld; World Bank Group.

Copyright notice: This document is published with the permission of the copyright holder and producer Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB). The original version of this document may be found on the official website of the IRB at <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/>. Documents earlier than 2003 may be found only on Refworld.