



2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Ghana

Publisher [United States Department of State](#)

Publication Date 25 June 2015

Cite as United States Department of State, *2014 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Ghana*, 25 June 2015, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/559bd56828.html> [accessed 20 August 2015]

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Ghana is a constitutional democracy with a strong presidency and a unicameral, 275-seat parliament. In late 2008 the National Democratic Congress (NDC) won both the presidency and a small majority in parliament in an election that domestic and international observers deemed generally free and fair. NDC candidate John Evans Atta Mills became president in early 2009 for a four-year term. When President Mills died in July 2012, Vice President John Dramani Mahama assumed the office of president. President Mahama won re-election in December 2012. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) alleged massive voting irregularities and filed a legal suit in the Supreme Court contesting the outcome of the election. In August 2013 the Supreme Court dismissed the case and upheld the results of the election. Authorities failed at times to maintain effective control over the security forces.

The most important human rights problems included trafficking in persons; exploitative child labor, including forced child labor; and harsh and life-threatening prison conditions.

Other human rights problems included use of excessive force by police that resulted in deaths and injuries; rape by police; prolonged pretrial detention; arbitrary arrest of journalists; corruption in all branches of government; violence against women and children, including female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C); societal discrimination against women, persons with disabilities, and persons with HIV/AIDS; societal discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals; ethnic discrimination and politically motivated violence; and ethnic killings and vigilante violence.

The government took steps to prosecute and punish officials who committed violations, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the government, but police impunity remained a problem.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

For example, in July a military officer in Xikpo, South Tongu District, Volta Region, allegedly shot and killed three participants in a demonstration to protest unsafe road conditions. The incident was under investigation.

Use of excessive force by security forces in the line of duty resulted in the deaths of several armed criminal suspects and other persons during the year.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

While the constitution and law prohibit such practices, there were credible reports police beat and otherwise abused suspects, prisoners, and other citizens. According to the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), beatings of suspects and other citizens occurred throughout the country but were generally unreported in official channels because victims were reluctant to file formal complaints. Police generally denied allegations or claimed the level of force used was justified. Military officials also reportedly mistreated persons. Several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), lawyers, and civil society organizations criticized police use of excessive force.

On March 5, Juan E. Mendez, UN special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, released a report of his findings from a November 2013 visit to a number of police and prison detention facilities. While the special rapporteur did not find a widespread pattern or systemic practice of torture or mistreatment by police, he found such abuses occurred in "some individual cases during arrest and transfer to police stations and interrogation" (see section 1.c., Prison and Detention Center Conditions).

Police raped women. In August three police officers – Donald Appiah, Joseph Kwakoh, and George Tanoe – were charged with defiling (having sex with a child younger than 16 years with or without consent) a 14-year-old girl. The officers had been called by the victim's father to her home to investigate a defilement complaint against a man who lived in a nearby town. Several days after the father filed the complaint, the officers returned to the home, abducted the victim, and raped her at the police station. Appiah was sentenced to nine years in prison; Kwakoh and Tanoe were awaiting sentencing at year's end.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

According to media and expert reports, prison conditions generally were harsh and sometimes life threatening due to physical abuse, food shortages, overcrowding, and inadequate sanitary conditions and medical care.

Physical Conditions: Prisons Service statistics available in August indicated 13,479 prisoners (13,235 men and 244 women) were held in prisons designed to hold approximately one-third that number. Of this total, 3,027 were remand prisoners. Authorities neither housed juvenile detainees separately from adults nor pretrial detainees separately from convicted prisoners, but women were held separately. No staff specifically focused on mental health, and inmates with mental disabilities were not routinely identified, separated, or transferred to general or psychiatric hospitals.

With few exceptions, prison overcrowding was "alarming," according to the UN special rapporteur. At the time of his 2013 visit, the male section of Nsawam Prison, designed to hold 717 inmates, held 3,773. Kumasi Prison, with a capacity of 800, held 1,981 inmates. Cellblocks there contained 115 convicted prisoners sharing a space of approximately 415 square feet. The remand sections were often worse, with cells so overcrowded (40 in a cell designed for four) that inmates were lying head to toe in a fetal position. Inmates in Sekondi Prison slept in shifts, sitting up, due to lack of space. Many prisoners slept on the floor without a mattress, mat, or blanket.

In 2012, the most recent year for which statistics were available, the government reported 94 deaths in custody, all from natural causes such as malaria, tuberculosis, or HIV.

Both guards and other prisoners physically abused prisoners. During his November 2013 visit, the

special rapporteur examined several detainees in Kumasi and Sekondi prisons and found three cases with clear physical evidence of recent and severe caning. Detainees' testimony indicated that prison guards sometimes used caning as punishment but that it was most often carried out by "black coats," a term referring to model prisoners, under the authority of prison staff. While the government acknowledged the existence of black coats, it denied they were given special powers or allowed to exercise disciplinary functions.

During his visit the special rapporteur also clinically documented traumatic physical injuries on seven juvenile inmates, resulting from a severe caning incident that had taken place within 48 hours prior to his visit. According to the boys' testimonies, the seven had been caned by an officer of the Senior Correctional Center (Ghana Borstal Institution). The Prisons Administration immediately convened a committee of inquiry to investigate the allegations. Three officers were found culpable, and the main perpetrator, the chief officer, was dismissed. Proceedings against the other two officers continued at year's end.

Prison food, according to the special rapporteur, was inadequate. There was an almost total absence of fruit, vegetables, or meat, and inmates relied on their families to supplement their diet. Officials held much of the prison population in buildings that were originally colonial forts or abandoned public or military buildings, with poor ventilation and sanitation, substandard construction, and limited space and light. Prisoners had access to potable water, however. The Prisons Service periodically fumigated and disinfected prisons, but sanitation remained poor. According to the special rapporteur, in one prison more than 100 prisoners shared one toilet, and toilets often overflowed with excrement.

Medical care was characterized as "wholly inadequate." Medical services were not provided by doctors but by medical assistants who were overstretched and lacked basic equipment and medicine. Hospitalization and treatment were routinely denied to prisoners requiring urgent care. All prison infirmaries had a severely limited supply of medicine. Prisons did not provide dental care. While there is a prison for inmates with contagious diseases in Ankaful, it could hold only 60 of the numerous prisoners with serious contagious illnesses.

Administration: There were reports that inadequate recordkeeping resulted in some pretrial detainees spending excessive time in jail awaiting trial. There were no reports of inadequate recordkeeping on sentenced prisoners. Nonviolent offenders were permitted to pay fines or use alternative dispute resolution as an alternative to incarceration. Prisoners and detainees had reasonable access to visitors and religious observance. There were no prison ombudsmen to respond to complaints. Authorities permitted prisoners and detainees to submit complaints to judicial authorities without censorship and to request investigation of credible allegations of inhuman conditions and treatment, but prisoners seldom did so. According to the special rapporteur, even when there were allegations of police brutality or use of excessive force, there was a general reluctance to complain, and as a result few cases were investigated. He also noted a lack of information concerning personnel who may be responsible for an offense under section 25 of the Prisons Service Act, which prohibits the use of torture or harsh treatment. He added that few investigations were conducted and that officials were seldom prosecuted.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted independent monitoring of prison conditions. Local NGOs, which were independent of government influence, worked on behalf of prisoners and detainees to help alleviate overcrowding, monitor juvenile confinement, and improve pretrial detention, bail, and recordkeeping procedures to ensure prisoners did not serve beyond the maximum sentence for the charged offenses.

The CHRAJ and the Welfare Unit of the Prisons Service monitored prison conditions and investigated credible allegations of inhuman conditions. In 2013 the CHRAJ visited 34 prisons.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law provide for protection against arbitrary arrest and detention, but the government frequently disregarded these protections.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The police, under the Ministry of Interior, are responsible for maintaining law and order, but the military continued to participate in law enforcement activities. A separate entity, the Bureau of National Investigations (BNI), handles cases considered critical to state security and answers directly to the Ministry of National Security. Police maintained specialized units in Accra for homicide, forensics, domestic violence, trafficking in persons, visa fraud, narcotics, and cybercrimes. Such services were unavailable nationwide due to the lack of office space, vehicles, and other equipment outside the capital.

Police brutality, corruption, negligence, and impunity were problems. There were delays in prosecuting suspects, rumors of police collaboration with criminals, and a widespread public perception of police ineptitude. There were credible reports that police extorted money by acting as private debt collectors, setting up illegal checkpoints, and arresting citizens in exchange for bribes from disgruntled business associates of those detained.

In April 2013 the Western Regional Police Command arrested five police officers for extortion. Dressed in uniform and armed with AK-47 rifles, the officers allegedly forced their way into the home of a foreign businessperson, threatened to arrest him, and demanded a payment of 10,000 cedis (\$3,100) in exchange for not taking him to jail. The officers, whose actions were captured on a closed-circuit security camera, were arrested several days later.

The Inspector General of Police, CHRAJ, and the Police Intelligence and Professional Standards Unit (PIPS) investigate claims that security forces used excessive force. PIPS also investigates human rights abuses and police misconduct. In 2013, the most recent year for which statistics were available, PIPS received 788 new complaints, of which 320 were closed and 468 remained under investigation at year's end. Of the 788 new cases, most involved unprofessional handling of a case or misconduct by police.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires judicial warrants for arrest and provides for arraignment within 48 hours, but police made frequent arrests without warrants and detained individuals without charge for periods longer than 48 hours. Officials detained some prisoners for indefinite periods by renewing warrants or simply allowing them to lapse while an investigation occurred. The constitution grants a detained individual the right to be informed immediately, in a language the person understands, of the reasons for detention and of his or her right to a lawyer at state expense if unemployed or indigent. The government did not consistently protect these rights, and legal aid for indigent detainees was limited or nonexistent, which sometimes resulted in years of pretrial detention, according to Amnesty International. The law requires that a detainee who has not been tried within a "reasonable time," as determined by the court, be released either unconditionally or subject to conditions necessary to ensure the person's appearance in court at a later date. This provision was rarely observed.

The law provides for bail, but courts at their unlimited discretion often set bail prohibitively high. The court may refuse to release prisoners on bail and instead may detain them without charge for an indefinite period, subject to weekly review by judicial authorities. On occasion police also demanded money from suspects as a precondition for their release on bail.

Arbitrary Arrest: At least one journalist was arbitrarily arrested during the year.

Pretrial Detention: Lengthy pretrial detention remained a serious problem. According to the Prisons Service's 2012 annual report, 22 percent of the prison population was in pretrial status. Detainees

sometimes served more time in detention awaiting trial than the maximum sentence prescribed for the crime with which they were charged.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

While the constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, the judiciary was subject to influence and corruption. Judicial officials reportedly accepted bribes to expedite or postpone cases or to "lose" records.

Despite alternate dispute resolution (ADR) procedures to decongest the courts and improve judicial inefficiency, court delays persisted. Professional mediators were trained to conduct ADR, and they worked in various district courts throughout the country to resolve disputes and avoid lengthy trials. Nevertheless, even in fast-track courts established to hear cases to conclusion within six months, trials could go on for years.

Members of the military are tried separately under the criminal code in a military court. Military courts, which provide the same rights as civilian courts, were not permitted to try civilians.

The Chieftaincy Act gives village and other traditional chiefs the power to mediate local matters and enforce customary tribal laws dealing with such matters as divorce, child custody, and property disputes. The authority of traditional rulers continued to erode, however, because of the growing power of civil institutions, including courts and district assemblies.

A judicial complaints unit headed by a retired Supreme Court justice addressed public complaints, such as unfair treatment by a court or judge, unlawful arrest or detention, missing trial dockets, delayed trials and rendering of judgments, and bribery of judges. From January through June, the complaints unit received 243 complaints and disposed of 223 cases; 20 cases remained pending.

Trial Procedures

Defendants are presumed innocent and have the right to be informed promptly and in detail of charges against them, with free interpretation as necessary. Defendants have the right to a fair and public trial without undue delay, but trials were often delayed. Juries are used in murder trials. Defendants have a right to be present at their trials, to be represented by an attorney (at public expense if necessary), to cross-examine witnesses, to have adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense, to have access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases, to present witnesses and evidence, and to confront prosecution or plaintiff witnesses. Defendants have the right not to be compelled to testify or confess guilt. Defendants have the right to appeal. Authorities generally respected these safeguards, and the law extends these rights to all citizens.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

There is an independent and impartial judiciary in civil matters, and citizens had access to a court to bring lawsuits seeking damages for, or cessation of, human rights violations.

Fast-track ADR courts and "automated" commercial courts, whose proceedings were expedited through electronic data management, continued efforts to streamline resolution of disputes, although delays were common. Additional automated courts were established across the country, and their randomly selected judges helped curb judicial corruption.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution prohibits such actions, and there were no reports the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

Although the constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and press, the government sometimes restricted those rights. During the year security force members assaulted, arrested, detained, and harassed journalists.

Press Freedoms: There were more than 150 newspapers and magazines, approximately 250 FM radio stations, and 28 television stations registered with the National Media Commission. The most popular publications were state owned, while the majority of television and radio stations were private. The independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views; nevertheless, the courts imposed steep fines on newspapers as a result of libel suits.

Violence and Harassment: Security officials assaulted, arrested, and harassed journalists throughout the country, even when the government had invited media to cover events.

For example, in March a military officer assaulted a photographer from *The Ghanaian Times* newspaper in Tamale, the capital of the Northern Region. The assault occurred while the photographer was attempting to take pictures of a confrontation between military personnel and local youth. The officer destroyed the photographer's camera and confiscated his tablet computer. No disciplinary action was taken against the officer.

In September the mayor of Accra ordered police to arrest *Joy News* reporters while they were filming and interviewing residents of Mensah Guinea, a suburb of Accra. The news team was reporting on residents' reaction to the government's demolition of makeshift housing structures, which authorities claimed were unsanitary and a breeding ground for cholera. The reporters were able to escape, but their driver was arrested.

Libel Laws/National Security: Academicians cited the punitive use of libel as a threat to press freedom. During the year the courts imposed steep fines as a result of libel suits.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports the government monitored private online communications without appropriate judicial authority. The internet was accessible in Accra and other large cities. There was limited but growing internet access in other parts of the country. According to the International Telecommunication Union, more than 12 percent of the population used the internet in 2013, the latest year for which data is available.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution and law provide for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected these freedoms in practice.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's [International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

The constitution provides for freedom of movement within the country, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights in practice. The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Protection of Refugees

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees.

The law allows rejected asylum seekers to appeal and remain in the country until an appeal is adjudicated. A four-member Appeals Committee, appointed by the minister of interior, is responsible for adjudicating the appeals, but these were often subject to delays. According to the Ghana Refugee Board, there were 15 asylum cases pending review by the interior minister; some of the cases were carried over from the previous year.

Refugee Abuse: Sexual and gender-based violence remained problems. According to the UNHCR, during the year two minors were raped by other refugees; the court sentenced one perpetrator to 10 years' imprisonment, and an investigation was being conducted into the other case. There also were two reports of refugees being assaulted by other refugees.

There were seven reports that citizens sexually harassed refugees at the Egyeikrom host community school. The cases were referred to the police Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit (DOVVSU) for prosecution. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) committees were located in each refugee camp to educate and sensitize the population on the subject. Regional SGBV task forces met quarterly to discuss the problem, and the UNHCR also provided legal, medical, and psychosocial assistance to SGBV survivors. Some SGBV survivors and women at risk received skills training and income-generating opportunities. SGBV victims who sought legal redress, however, had limited community support.

Employment: Refugees could apply for work permits through the same process as other foreigners. Work permits, however, generally were issued only for employment in the formal sector, while the majority of refugees worked in the informal sector.

Durable Solutions: In 2011 nearly 18,000 residents of Cote d'Ivoire fled to Ghana because of political instability following Cote d'Ivoire's disputed 2010 presidential election. As of July, 10,803 Ivoirian refugees remained in the country, an increase from the 8,857 that remained in October 2013; 11 were repatriated between January and July. The increase resulted from family reunification and continued concerns over political instability in Cote d'Ivoire. Although Ivoirian refugees were granted prima facie refugee status during the initial stages of the emergency, by the end of 2012 the government had transitioned to individual refugee status determination for all Ivoirians entering thereafter.

In 2012 the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration assisted with the voluntary repatriation of more than 4,700 Liberians from Ghana. For the approximately 4,000 Liberians who opted for local integration, the UNHCR and the Ghana Refugee Board were working with the Liberian government to ensure the timely issuance of passports for the regularization of their immigration status in Ghana. The Ghana Immigration Service also supported the process by issuing reduced-cost residency permits, including work permits for adults, to locally integrating former Liberian refugees.

The UNHCR estimated that as of July, 20,970 refugees and asylum seekers remained in Ghana. This figure included refugees and asylum seekers from Cote d'Ivoire (10,708), Liberia (5,252), Togo (3,700), and Sudan (452), as well as other countries.

Section 3. Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The constitution and law provide citizens the ability to change their government through free and fair elections, which citizens generally exercised through elections based on universal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: Domestic and international election observers deemed the December 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections to be generally free and fair, despite logistical and other problems. The elections were the first in which voters presented biometric identification cards to vote, an initiative intended to eliminate multiple voting. Due to biometric voter verification machine failures and late openings of polling stations, particularly in Accra, authorities extended voting an extra day. The independent Electoral Commission declared President Mahama the winner of the presidential election. The opposition NPP candidate, Nana Akufo-Addo, and that party's leadership alleged voting irregularities, however, and filed suit before the Supreme Court in December 2012. In August 2013 the Supreme Court dismissed the NPP's case and declared Mahama had been legitimately elected president in the 2012 election.

Participation of Women and Minorities: There are no laws preventing women from voting or participating in political life on the same basis as men, but women traditionally and culturally have held fewer leadership positions than men. Women held 29 of 275 seats in parliament, eight of 28 ministers were women, and four of 13 Supreme Court justices were women, including the chief justice.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for official corruption, but the government did not implement the law effectively, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices. Corruption was present in all branches of government, according to media and NGOs, and the World Bank's most recent Worldwide Governance Indicators reflected corruption was a problem.

Corruption: In July the BNI uncovered a major corruption scandal at the National Service Scheme (NSS), which is responsible for assigning students to one year of mandatory national service, for which they are compensated. BNI investigations revealed more than 200,000 false payroll accounts in the names of the students who were unable to participate in service projects in more than 100 districts across the country. Approximately eight million Ghana cedis (\$2.46 million) were paid out to these false accounts. Authorities arrested 23 NSS officials in connection with the scandal. In September, BNI officials revealed NSS officials offered them 200,000 cedis (\$61,500), laptops, traditional smocks, yams, and goats in bribes to stop the investigation, which continued at year's end.

During the year the government suspended the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial Development Agency (GYEEDA) to facilitate a comprehensive restructuring of the agency. In 2013 the agency was cited for incompetent leadership, mismanagement of procurement and contracts, and inadequate oversight of program finances. The trials of two officials linked with operations of GYEEDA, which received more than 949 million cedis (\$292 million) in government support between 2009 and 2012, continued at year's end.

In July parliament unanimously adopted the CHRAJ's National Anti-Corruption Action Plan 2012-20, which calls for resources to combat corruption and enforce applicable laws in the public, private, and

nonprofit sectors. In December 2013 a fire destroyed offices of the CHRAJ's Anti-Corruption Department.

The CHRAJ investigates human rights abuses, public corruption, and abuse of power, and is empowered to recommend punishments for violators. The attorney general, the Economic and Organized Crime Office (EOCO), and the Public Prosecutor's Office – all of which are under the Ministry of Justice – are responsible for prosecution. The attorney general is the lead prosecuting agency. The EOCO investigates financial crimes, such as money laundering and cybercrime, and is the lead agency to prosecute these crimes; however, it has prosecuted no cases since its establishment in 2010. The Public Prosecutor's Office acts as the lead enforcer of criminal laws and the protector of the state's legal interests.

The Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee is responsible for auditing government spending, and the Auditor General's Department reviews public sector accounts.

Financial Disclosure: There is no law requiring elected or appointed officials to disclose information about their income or assets. Such information can be obtained only through court order, and only the auditor general is allowed to review documents so obtained. Financial information typically was not disclosed to the public.

Public Access to Information: The constitution provides for public access to government information, but obtaining such access was difficult. Government offices kept poor records, many official records were missing, and requests for information often received no reply.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups, including the CHRAJ, the Human Rights Advocacy Center (HRAC), and the Ark Foundation, generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials generally were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The CHRAJ, which mediated and settled cases brought by individuals against government agencies or private companies, operated with no overt interference from the government; however, some critics questioned its ability independently to investigate high-level corruption. Its biggest obstacle was a lack of adequate funding, which resulted in low salaries, poor working conditions, and the loss of many of its staff to other governmental organizations and NGOs. Public confidence in the CHRAJ was high, resulting in an increased workload for its staff. In December 2013 a fire demolished the premises of the CHRAJ's Anti-Corruption Department, as well as several other offices. The fire destroyed documents, records, and equipment, reducing the commission's productivity.

The Committee on the Constitution, Legal Issues, and Parliamentary Affairs, a standing parliamentary committee, was effective. It addressed human rights issues in parliament, including the 2013 Property Rights of Spouses Bill.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, disability, language, or social status; however, enforcement was generally inadequate. Limited financial resources and a generally permissive societal attitude toward such discrimination contributed to its perpetuation. Courts were empowered to order specific enforcement of these prohibitions.

Protection of Refugees

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape but not spousal rape. Convicted rapists may be punished with prison sentences ranging from five to 25 years. Rape was significantly underreported and remained a serious problem. The DOVVSU worked closely with the Department of Social Welfare, the national chapter of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, the Legal Aid Board, and several other human rights NGOs to combat domestic violence. In 2013, the latest year for which data was available, the DOVVSU received 312 reports of rape and reported 106 arrests and 78 prosecutions, resulting in six convictions; 231 cases remained under investigation at year's end.

Although the law prohibits domestic violence, it continued to be a problem. The law stipulates that a person in a domestic relationship who engages in misdemeanor domestic violence is liable on summary conviction to a fine, a term of imprisonment of not more than two years, or both. The court also may order the offender to pay compensation directly to the victim. Inadequate resources and logistical capacity in the DOVVSU and other agencies, however, hindered the full application of the law. Unless specifically called upon by the DOVVSU, police seldom intervened in cases of domestic violence, in part due to a lack of counseling skills, shelter facilities, and other resources to assist victims. In many cases victims were discouraged from reporting abuse and from cooperating with prosecutors because they were aware of long delays in bringing such cases to trial. Victims frequently did not complete their formal complaints because they could not afford the fees doctors charged to document the abuse on police medical forms. Victims also did not report domestic violence (or rape) because of fear of retaliation. According to the DOVVSU, of the 255 rape and domestic assault cases sent to court in 2013, only 16 resulted in convictions.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibits FGM/C, and although it remained a serious problem for children, it rarely was performed on adult women.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: In the Northern, Upper East, and Upper West regions, where adherence to indigenous religious beliefs remained strong, rural women and men suspected of witchcraft were banished by their families or traditional village authorities to "witch camps." At these villages in the north populated by suspected witches, some of those interned were accompanied by their families. Such camps were distinct from "prayer camps," to which persons with mental illness were sometimes sent by their families. Most accused witches were older women, often widows, whom fellow villagers accused of being the cause of difficulties, such as illness, crop failure, or financial misfortune. Some persons suspected of witchcraft were also killed. NGOs provided food, medical care, and other support to residents of the camps. The CHRAJ claimed the number of women in witch camps in the Northern Region decreased slightly in recent years. According to a June survey by the Anti-Witchcraft Campaign Coalition, however, the camps contained 785 female residents and 490 children; in 2010 the CHRAJ reported 175 female and eight male residents.

The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection monitors witch camps. The CHRAJ has an office in Tamale in the Northern Region, which supports efforts to protect the rights of those accused of being witches and monitors four of the seven camps that exist.

In 2013 the minister of gender, children, and social protection, accompanied by HRAC staff, visited the Gambaga Witch Camp in the Northern Region. Following the visit the HRAC issued a statement claiming that the conditions of the camp violated article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which calls for an adequate standard of living for health and well-being.

The law criminalizes harmful mourning rites, but such rites continued, and no perpetrators were prosecuted. In the north, especially in the Upper West Region, widows are required to undergo certain indigenous rites to mourn or show devotion to the deceased spouse. A 2013 study by the CHRAJ found the most prevalent widowhood rites included a one-year period of mourning, tying ropes and padlocks around the widow's waist, forced sitting by the deceased spouse until burial, solitary confinement, forced starvation, shaving the widow's hair, and smearing clay on the widow's body. If a

widow engages in work or economic activity after the spouse's death, she may be regarded as adulterous, considered the cause of the spouse's death, or declared a witch. In these instances the widow may be forced to undergo purification rites or leave her home.

Sexual Harassment: No laws specifically prohibit sexual harassment, although some sexual harassment cases were prosecuted under provisions of the criminal code. Women's advocacy groups, including the HRAC, reported sexual harassment remained a widespread problem.

Reproductive Rights: Couples and individuals have the right to decide freely the number, spacing, and timing of pregnancies. According to the government's Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), use of a modern contraceptive method by women (married or in a relationship) rose from 17 percent in 2008 to 23 percent in 2011.

According to 2013 UN statistics, there were 380 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births. While more than 95 percent of women received some prenatal care, the quality of that care was widely perceived to be inadequate. The 2011 MICS found 67 percent of deliveries occurred with the assistance of a skilled health-care provider, likely due to free pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum care being included in benefits under the National Health Insurance Scheme. Postpartum care for mothers lagged, however, as at least 26 percent of women who delivered in a health facility left within the first 12 hours after the birth. In addition health organizations reported nearly 60 percent of all pregnant women were anemic, and both women and their developing fetuses frequently experienced increased susceptibility to malaria.

An estimated 10 percent of the population knew their HIV status. Approximately 30 percent of HIV-positive pregnant mothers received antiretroviral medications to prevent mother-to-child transmission.

Discrimination: The constitution provides for equal treatment of all persons under the law, but traditional practices and societal norms often denied women their statutory entitlements to inheritance and property, a legally registered marriage with associated legal rights, and the right to adequate resources to maintain and exercise custody of children. Women also continued to experience discrimination in access to employment, credit, and education (see section 7.d.). Women typically did not have property or assets to use as collateral for loans, thus effectively preventing them from gaining access to credit. Rural families often focused on educating male children at the expense of female children. Since females typically married into other families, their educational needs were often overlooked.

Women's rights groups, including the Ark Foundation, were active in educational campaigns and in programs to provide vocational training, legal aid, and other support to women. The government was involved in educational programs targeting women, and many officials were advocates of women's rights. The Ministry of Chieftaincy and Traditional Affairs conducted research during the year on how to eliminate harmful traditional practices that targeted women, including FGM/C, forced marriages, and witch camps.

Children

Birth Registration: Citizenship is derived by birth in or outside the country if either of the child's parents or one grandparent is a citizen of Ghana; however, not all births were registered with the government. Some children were reportedly denied education because their births were not registered, although a birth certificate is not a legal precondition to attend school.

Education: The constitution provides for "free, compulsory, and universal basic education" for all children from kindergarten through junior high school; however, parents were required to purchase uniforms and writing materials. During the year the government provided school uniforms to approximately 10,000 children in "deprived" areas. The government also operated a school feeding program for more than 1.6 million children, which covered incidental costs as well as meals, and a

nationwide capitation grant program that covered other school fees for all children attending public schools.

According to the Ministry of Education, girls attending public primary school during the 2012-13 school year constituted 48.7 percent of all students; at the junior high school level, the proportion was 47.1 percent. In 2013 the Ghana Education Service campaigned to expand education for girls by providing 15,700 scholarships at the junior high school level and by offering home rations to 90,000 girls in the three northern regions. The education service placed girls' education officers at regional and district levels, and there were community participation coordinators in every district office to mobilize communities to increase enrollment of girls.

Child Abuse: The law prohibits defilement (having sex with a child younger than 16 years with or without consent), incest, and sexual abuse of minors. In 2013 the DOVVSU received 1,228 complaints of suspected child defilement and eight cases of attempted defilement; the true number of cases was believed to be much higher. There were frequent press reports that male teachers sexually assaulted and harassed female students. Girls often were reluctant to report these incidents to their parents, and social pressure often prevented parents from going to authorities. There were press reports during the year of teachers, coaches, and headmasters/headmistresses arrested for sexual harassment of female students or dismissed for ignoring reported problems. There were also a few reports of male teachers arrested for sexually assaulting male students.

Early and Forced Marriage: According to the law, the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 years. Nevertheless, forced child marriage, which is illegal, remained a problem, and no improvements were noted during the year, according to the CHRAJ and NGOs.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): The law prohibits female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), but it was a problem. According to the 2011 MICS, 4.2 percent of women and girls were victims of some form of FGM/C. In the Upper West and East regions, where FGM/C was most prevalent, 41 percent of women and 28 percent of girls had undergone the procedure. Type II FGM, defined by the World Health Organization as the excision of the clitoris with partial or total excision of the labia minora, was most commonly perpetrated. A girl was typically excised between four and 14 years of age.

Intervention programs were somewhat successful in reducing the prevalence of FGM/C, particularly in the northern regions. Officials at all levels, including traditional chiefs, continued to speak out against the practice, and local NGOs continued educational campaigns to encourage abandonment of FGM/C and to train practitioners for alternative employment.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The minimum age for consensual sex is 16 years, and defilement is punishable by imprisonment for seven to 25 years. There is no legislation specific to child pornography, but it can be prosecuted as an "offense against public morals" and is punishable by imprisonment for a period not to exceed three years and/or a fine ranging from 120 to 600 cedis (\$37 to \$185). The government generally enforced the law, but sexual exploitation occurred. The migration of children to urban areas continued due to economic hardship in rural areas. Children were often forced to support themselves to survive, contributing to both the incidence of child prostitution and the school dropout rate. Girls under 18 years of age were among the most vulnerable child laborers, as many also engaged in prostitution or were sexually exploited in exchange for protection while living on the streets.

Local and international NGOs, including Rescue Foundation Ghana, Child Rights International, and Challenging Heights, worked with the government to promote children's rights and were somewhat successful in sensitizing communities about protecting the welfare of children.

Displaced Children: The country had a large refugee population, and children living in poor rural areas often migrated to urban areas to survive.

International Child Abductions: The country is not a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. For information see the Department of State's report at travel.state.gov/content/childabduction/english/country/ghana.html.

Anti-Semitism

The Jewish community had a few hundred members. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's [Trafficking in Persons Report](#).

Persons with Disabilities

The law explicitly prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, health care, air travel and other transportation, and other domains. The government did not effectively enforce the law. Children with disabilities attended specialized schools that focused on their needs, but few adults with disabilities had employment opportunities (see section 7.d.).

According to a 2012 Human Rights Watch (HRW) report, more than five million persons – one-fifth of the population – had disabilities, including 2.8 million persons with mental disabilities. The World Health Organization estimated that only 2 percent of Ghanaians with mental disorders received treatment.

The law provides that persons with disabilities have access to public spaces with "appropriate facilities that make the place accessible to and available for use by a person with disability." The inaccessibility of public buildings continued to be a problem, however, and 53 percent of school buildings were not easily accessible to persons with disabilities, according to a 2013 CHRAJ report.

Thousands of persons with mental disabilities were sent to spiritual healing centers known as "prayer camps," where mental illness was often considered a "demonic affliction." Frequently located in the Greater Accra, Eastern, Central, Western, Ashanti, and Brong Ahafo regions, prayer camp residents were chained for weeks, physically assaulted, and denied food or water – often for seven consecutive days – to cleanse them of evil spirits. Few could challenge their confinement, according to HRW.

On March 10, Juan E. Mendez, UN special rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, released a report of his findings from a November 2013 visit to the country's mental health facilities, as well as to some of its police and prison detention facilities. While commending the country for its passage of the 2012 Mental Health Act, he expressed concern that few steps had been taken to carry out the requirements of the legislation, a complaint also made by Voice Ghana, a disability advocacy organization. Characterizing as "inhumane" the conditions in psychiatric hospitals and at "prayer camps," the report documented cases of shackling and denial of food and water to persons with mental disabilities, including children as young as seven. Echoing HRW recommendations from 2012, Mendez called for an absolute ban on the use of electroshock therapy without consent and a prohibition on chaining and other forms of prolonged restraint. Noting the country had only one psychiatrist for every two million persons, he also highlighted the need for additional mental health professionals.

In its 2012 report, HRW urged the government to monitor closely all mental health facilities to end the widespread mistreatment of persons with mental disabilities. It noted psychiatric hospitals were overcrowded and unsanitary. In the eight prayer camps HRW visited in 2012, nearly all residents were chained by their ankles to trees in open compounds or in prison-like cells, where they slept, urinated, defecated, and bathed. The report noted some families caring for mentally ill members had limited financial resources and viewed prayer camps as an accessible treatment option. Although HRW and

other NGOs urged regulation of prayer camps, no regulations were implemented by year's end. The Mental Health Authority, however, continued a pilot program that places psychiatric nurses in prayer camps to give medication to patients while they pray.

Persons with both mental and physical disabilities, including children, were frequently subjected to abuse and intolerance. Children with disabilities who lived at home were sometimes tied to trees or under market stalls and caned regularly; some reportedly were killed by their families. The Ghana Education Service, through its Special Education Unit, provided assistive technology devices such as braille readers to blind and visually impaired students.

Several government agencies and NGOs were involved in addressing discrimination against persons with disabilities, including the National Council on Persons with Disability; Ministry of Health; Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection; Ministry of Education; and Center for Democratic Development.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

According to the criminal code, "unnatural carnal knowledge" is defined as "sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner or with an animal." It states that individuals who have unnatural carnal knowledge "of any person of 16 years or over with his consent" is guilty of a misdemeanor. There was considerable public debate over whether this legislation could be used to prosecute consenting adults for same-sex sexual activity, but there were no reports it had been used.

LGBT persons faced widespread discrimination in employment and education, as well as police harassment and extortion attempts (see section 7.d.). There were reports police were reluctant to investigate claims of assault or violence against LGBT persons. According to the HRAC, gay men in prison were often subjected to sexual and other physical abuse. The government took no known action to investigate or punish those complicit in the abuses. An LGBT refugee was ostracized by other members of a refugee camp during the year.

In August police in Walewale, a small farming town and capital of the West Mamprusi District, Northern Region, arrested a 21-year-old man on suspicion of being homosexual and "recruiting" other youth to be homosexual. Police stated the arrest was for the suspect's own safety, since residents of the town had vowed to kill the man and his entire family if he was not removed from the community.

While there were no reported cases of police or government violence against LGBT persons during the year, stigma, intimidation, and the attitude of the police toward LGBT persons were likely factors in preventing victims from reporting incidents of abuse.

HIV and AIDS Social Stigma

In the most recent Demographic and Health Survey for Ghana (2008), 68 percent of women and 57 percent of men reported holding discriminatory attitudes towards persons with HIV.

According to the West Africa AIDS Foundation, discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS was a problem. Fear of being stigmatized continued to discourage persons from being tested for HIV infection and those who tested positive from seeking timely care. HIV-positive persons faced discrimination in employment and often were forced to leave their jobs or houses. The government and NGOs subsidized many centers that provided free HIV testing to citizens, although high patient volume and the physical layout of many clinics made it difficult for the centers to respect confidentiality at all times.

According to UNAIDS Ghana, continuing mandatory pre-employment HIV screening in security agencies impeded efforts to reduce stigma and discrimination. Security agencies, including the

military and police service, used HIV status as a screening criterion in their recruitment processes and peacekeeping assignments.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

Ritual killings continued to occur. For example, in August police in Bolgatanga Municipality, Upper East Region, found a decapitated head, severed genitals, a chain padlock, the wing of a bird, and a pair of slippers buried in a building under construction. Police suspected the killing was committed for ritual purposes and arrested the owner of the building, but no charges had been pressed by year's end.

Chieftaincy disputes, which frequently resulted from lack of a clear chain of succession, competing claims over land and other natural resources, and internal rivalries and feuds, continued to result in deaths, injuries, and destruction of property.

In June 2013 one person was killed and three others were injured in Teshie, Accra, when feuding factions clashed over naming a successor to a chief who died in 1984. Police arrested four suspects in connection with the violence and were investigating the incident.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law allows workers – except for members of the armed forces, police, Prisons Service, and other security and intelligence agency personnel – to form and join unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements. The law requires that trade unions or employers' organizations must register; be authorized by the chief labor officer, an appointed government official; and obtain a certificate of registration.

The law recognizes the right to strike but restricts that right for workers who provide "essential services." The minister of employment and labor relations designated a list of essential services, which included many sectors falling outside the International Labor Organization's (ILO) essential services definition. The list included services carried out by utility companies (water, electricity, etc.), ports and harbors, medical centers, and the Bank of Ghana. In these sectors the parties to any labor disputes are required to resolve their differences within 72 hours; the deadline is intended to put pressure on employers and employees to operate efficiently with limited interruptions. The right to strike can also be restricted for workers in private enterprises whose services are deemed essential to the survival of the enterprise by a union and an employer. A union may call a legal strike only if the parties fail to agree to refer the dispute to voluntary arbitration or if the dispute remains unresolved at the end of arbitration proceedings. Additionally the Emergency Powers Act of 1994 grants authorities the power to suspend any law and prohibit public meetings and processions, but it was unclear if the law applies to labor disputes.

The law provides a framework for collective bargaining. Only unions that represent the majority of workers in a given company, however, can obtain a collective bargaining certificate, which is required to engage in collective bargaining. In cases where there are multiple unions in an enterprise, the majority union generally receives the certificate and conducts the bargaining. The certificate holder generally includes representatives from the smaller unions. The armed forces, police, Prisons Service, security and intelligence personnel, and workers with policy-making and managerial functions do not have the right to bargain collectively.

The National Labor Commission is a government body with the mandate of ensuring employers and unions comply with labor law. It also serves as a forum for arbitration in labor disputes.

The law allows unions to conduct their activities without interference and provides reinstatement for

workers dismissed under unfair pretenses. The labor law also prohibits antiunion discrimination by employers and provides for reinstatement for workers fired for union activity. It protects trade union members and their officers against discrimination if they organize within the free zones. The law, however, also provides for an employer's right to terminate workers' employment without giving cause.

The government generally protected the right to form and join independent unions and to conduct legal strikes and bargain collectively, and workers exercised these rights. Worker organizations were independent of the government and political parties, and there were no instances of government interference in union activities during the year. There were no reports of violence, threats, or other abuses targeting union leaders and members by government or employers. While there were no instances of employers who refused to bargain, bargained with unions not chosen by workers, or hired workers without bargaining rights, some instances of subtle employer interference in union activities occurred. Since many unions also did not fully understand the labor laws, they normally did not follow approved processes for dealing with disputes. Due to lack of awareness about its role, the National Labor Commission faced challenges in enforcing applicable sanctions against both unions and employers.

Trade unions engaged in collective bargaining for wages and benefits with both private and state-owned enterprises without government interference. No union had ever completed the dispute resolution process involving arbitration, and there were numerous unsanctioned strikes during the year. Some employers continued to fire employees for union activity.

NGOs not designated as labor organizations occasionally worked on labor-related freedom-of-association issues as well as broader human rights concerns.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. Provisions of various laws prescribe imprisonment and an obligation to perform prison labor as punishment for violations. For employers found guilty of using forced labor, the law provides for fines of no more than 250 penalty units (each unit is assigned a monetary value adjusted for the fluctuating inflation rate).

There were indications of compulsory labor affecting both children and adults in the fishing sector, illegal mining, and agriculture. During the year children were forced to work (see section 7.c.). Some victims were forced to work on boats as children and were sometimes unable to leave their employers and continued to work without pay as adults. In the illegal mining industry (consisting of independent, artisanal miners known as "galamseys," whose operations sometimes conflicted with larger, concessionary miners), NGOs cited debt bondage as a problem. There were newspaper reports of children sold into involuntary servitude for either sexual exploitation or labor, such as 10- to 12-year-old boys working for fishermen in exchange for a yearly remittance to their families. The practice often involved parental consent. The media regularly published stories about children used in involuntary servitude, particularly as street hawkers and porters.

The government did not commit sufficient resources to enforce legislation prohibiting forced labor. No fines were levied during the year, and no legal cases were brought that resulted in imprisonment. Data on the number of victims removed from forced labor were not available. Information also was not available regarding government efforts to bring its labor laws into conformity with the ILO Convention on forced labor as recommended by the ILO in 1994.

Also see the Department of State's [Trafficking in Persons Report](#).

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law sets the minimum employment age at 15 years, or 13 years for light work unlikely to be

harmful to a child or to affect the child's attendance at or capacity to benefit from school. The law prohibits night work and certain types of hazardous labor for those under age 18 and provides for fines and imprisonment for violators. The law allows for children age 15 and above to have an apprenticeship under which craftsmen and employers have the obligation to provide a safe and healthy work environment along with training and tools.

Child labor laws were not enforced effectively or consistently, and law enforcement officials, including judges, police, and labor officials, were sometimes unfamiliar with the provisions of the law that protected children.

Inspectors from the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations were responsible for enforcement of child labor regulations, and district labor officers and the social services subcommittees of district assemblies were charged with assuring that the relevant provisions of the law were observed by annually visiting workplaces and making spot checks whenever they received allegations of violations. Inspectors were required to provide employers with information about child labor violations and effective means to comply with provisions of the law. The government, however, did not provide sufficient resources to law enforcement and judicial authorities to carry out these efforts.

The ILO, government representatives, the Trade Union Congress, the media, international organizations, and NGOs continued efforts to increase institutional capacity to combat child labor.

The government continued to work closely with NGOs, labor unions, and the cocoa industry to eliminate the worst forms of child labor in the industry. Through these partnerships the government created several community projects, which promoted sensitization, monitoring, and livelihood improvement. During the year the government completed the Child Labor Monitoring System pilot program in the cocoa industry and planned to apply a similar monitoring system to other industries throughout the country.

According to government labor officials and the Ghana Employers Association, child labor problems were infrequent in the formal labor sector. During the year several ministries conducted seminars on child labor to educate the media, police, civil servants, and the general public. Local custom and poverty, however, encouraged children to work to help support their families and eroded societal observance of child labor laws, particularly in the informal sector, where child labor remained a serious problem.

Children as young as age seven worked in agriculture and artisanal gold mining as well as domestic laborers, porters, hawkers, miners, quarry workers, beggars, and fare collectors. Children also engaged in herding livestock, fetching firewood, and bricklaying. Children in the region also engaged in work as domestic servants, cooks, servers, and porters. In the fishing industry in the Lake Volta region, child laborers engaged in potentially hazardous work, such as diving into deep waters to untangle fishing nets caught on submerged tree roots. In August the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit of the police service intercepted seven city buses carrying 33 children who were being trafficked to Lake Volta to work in the fishing industry.

Children were also forced to work, sometimes after being sold, leased, or given away by their parents to work in fishing villages, shops, or homes. It was difficult to determine the extent of forced and bonded labor by children.

Child laborers were often poorly paid and physically abused; they received little or no health care and generally did not attend school.

Also see the Department of Labor's [*Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor*](#).

d. Discrimination with respect to Employment or Occupation

The law prohibits discrimination in employment or occupation on grounds of gender, race, color, ethnic origin, religion, creed, social or economic status, disability, or politics.

Discrimination in employment and occupation occurred with respect to women, the disabled, HIV-positive persons, and LGBT persons (see section 6). Women in urban centers and those with skills and training encountered little overt bias, but resistance persisted to women entering nontraditional fields. Women, especially in rural areas, remained subject to burdensome labor conditions, including the performance of physically difficult manual labor such as farming, transporting goods, and manual household chores, while often carrying a child on their backs.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

A National Tripartite Committee composed of representatives of the government, labor, and employers set a daily minimum wage, which was six cedis (\$1.85). The law sets the maximum workweek at 40 hours, with a break of at least 48 consecutive hours every seven days. Workers were entitled to at least 15 working days of leave with full pay in a calendar year of continuous service or after having worked at least 200 days in a particular year. Such provisions, however, did not apply to task workers or domestic workers in private homes, nor elsewhere in the informal sector. The law does not prescribe overtime rates and does not prohibit excessive compulsory overtime.

The government sets occupational safety and health (OSH) regulations. The Factories Department within the Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations was responsible for imposing sanctions on violators of the OSH standards. Employers who failed to comply were liable to a fine not exceeding 1,000 penalty units, imprisonment for a term not exceeding three years, or both. The law requires that employers report occupational accidents and diseases no later than seven days from the date of occurrence. Only workers in the formal sector, which employed less than 20 percent of the labor force, were covered by this legislation.

The Ministry of Employment and Labor Relations was unable to enforce the wage law effectively. There was widespread violation of the minimum wage law in the formal economy across all sectors. The minimum wage law was not enforced in the informal sector. Legislation governing working hours was largely followed in the formal sector but widely flouted and not enforced in the informal sector.

Safety inspectors were few and poorly trained, and they lacked the resources to respond to violations effectively. Inspectors did not impose sanctions or otherwise respond to violations during the year. Specific information regarding the number of labor inspectors and adequacy of penalties was not available. There were no reports of specific government action taken during the year to prevent violations or improve wages and working conditions.

As first documented in a 2008 CHRAJ report, abuses by the security services in mining areas, particularly among galamseys, continued to be a concern. In August 2013 residents of Twifo Praso, Central Region, alleged a police raid on an illegal galamsey mining site resulted in officers unlawfully shooting and killing two men. The government ordered an investigation into the incident and claimed the two men died of drowning, not gunshot wounds; however, it added that the police officers involved in the raid had overstepped their operational boundaries.

The law provides for compulsory participation in the Social Security and National Insurance Trust Pension Scheme as well as the National Health Insurance Scheme; however, the government did not always enforce compliance, particularly in the informal sector. The law provides for work injury insurance and maternity insurance. Unemployment insurance is not provided by law.

Workers can remove themselves from situations that endanger their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment, and authorities effectively protected employees in this situation.

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