



Amnesty International Report 2015/16 - Ghana

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Republic of Ghana

Head of state and government: **John Dramani Mahama**

Excessive use of force by police was reported in the context of demonstrations and mass evictions. Torture and other ill-treatment continued to be reported and prison conditions remained a concern. Violence against women remained widespread; there was particular concern about banishment for witchcraft. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people faced discrimination and were targeted for attack. Death sentences continued to be handed down.

BACKGROUND

A process to review the Constitution was delayed owing to a court case challenging the legality of the Constitutional Review Implementation Committee. In October, the Supreme Court dismissed the case.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In September, police fired tear gas and used batons to disperse demonstrators taking part in a peaceful demonstration, after failing to agree on a route for the march. The demonstration was organized by the Let My Vote Count Alliance calling for a new voters' register.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In October, the UN Special Rapporteur on torture visited Ghana to follow up on the recommendations he had made following his 2013 visit. While welcoming the fact that some progress had been made, he expressed concern that the police and intelligence services continued to use torture and other ill-treatment.

He also noted the lack of due diligence and urgency shown by oversight mechanisms in investigating allegations of torture or other ill-treatment and the need for the expansion and effective implementation of the Legal Aid Scheme.

He noted no significant lessening of overcrowding in detention centres or improvement in conditions of detention, such as poor sanitation and inadequate nutrition.

HOUSING RIGHTS

A National Housing Policy was adopted in March, with the overall goal of providing decent and affordable housing that is accessible and sustainable.

On 20-21 June, several thousand people were evicted from Accra's largest slum, Old Fadama. Popularly known as Sodom and Gomorrah, the slum was home to around 50,000 people. Police used tear gas against people demonstrating against the demolition and several people were injured. Amnesty International expressed concern that these evictions did not conform to international human rights standards and that better guidelines are needed.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against women and girls remained widespread. In recent years, several hundred women have been accused of witchcraft by members of their communities and banished to live in isolated camps with minimal access to health care, education, sanitation and other services. Although the government, in collaboration with traditional leaders and civil society, shut down the Bonyasi witch camp in December 2014, and announced it would close others, some camps remained open at the end of the year.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

Consensual same-sex conduct between men remained a criminal offence and many LGBTI people faced discrimination, violence and police harassment.

In February, some Ghanaian celebrities condemned the beating of a music promoter who was suspected of being gay.

In September, police arrested Sulley Fuiseni, leader of a group called Safety Empire which is accused of attacking LGBTI people in the Nima district of Accra. His trial was continuing at the end of the year.

DEATH PENALTY

No executions have taken place since 1993. However, Ghana retains the death penalty and courts continued to hand down death sentences. The government took no action during the year in response to the recommendations made in 2014 by the UN Human Rights Committee and the Committee's condemnation of the use of automatic and mandatory death sentences in Ghana.

Proposals made by the Constitutional Review Implementation Committee to abolish the death penalty were stalled as a result of delays in the constitutional review process.

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