

# **Ghana 2024 Human Rights Report**

## **Executive Summary**

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Ghana during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of arbitrary arrest or detention, and serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including violence or threats of violence against journalists,

The government took limited steps to identify and punish officials who committed human rights abuses.

## **Section 1. Life**

### **a. Extrajudicial Killings**

There were no reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings during the year.

### **b. Coercion in Population Control**

There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization on the part of government officials.

## **Section 2. Liberty**

### **a. Freedom of the Press**

The constitution and law provided for freedom of expression, including for the press and other media, and the government generally respected this right.

Political party operatives verbally harassed academics on social media platforms and on the radio for expressing critical or divergent opinions. The verbal harassment reportedly led to self-censorship.

### **Physical Attacks, Imprisonment, and Pressure**

Media members were subjected to violence and harassment because of their reporting. On January 27, the member of Parliament for Yendi in the Northern Region, Farouk Aliu Mahama, and his supporters assaulted Mohammed Alabira, the Northern region correspondent of Citi FM/TV. Mahama slapped Alabira while he was filing a live report during the New Patriotic Party's parliamentary primary for the Yendi Constituency, which turned violent, allegedly due to the actions of the incumbent's supporters. The Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) condemned the incident, describing it as an abuse of press freedom and a direct attack on democratic values. The GJA called for the immediate arrest and prosecution of Mahama and his accomplices. Despite these calls, no arrests or charges against the

parliamentarian or his supporters were reported as of year's end.

### **Censorship by Governments, Military, Intelligence, or Police Forces, Criminal Groups, or Armed Extremist or Rebel Groups**

The law provided for criminal penalties for those who posted false or misleading information online, with penalties of up to five years in prison and substantial fines.

Journalists reportedly practiced self-censorship to protect the political interests of media owners, avoid costly legal battles, and prevent threats or intimidation. Self-censorship was more pronounced in politically aligned media organizations and smaller outlets that lacked legal support, particularly when dealing with sensitive matters involving politicians or other powerful individuals or institutions.

## **b. Worker Rights**

### **Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining**

The law provided for the right of workers to form and join unions of their choice without previous authorization or excessive requirements except for members of the armed forces, police, prisons service, and other security and intelligence agencies. The law provided for the right to collective bargaining. The law prohibited but did not provide adequate protection against antiunion discrimination. The law required trade unions or employers'

organizations to obtain a certificate of registration and be authorized by the chief labor officer, an appointed government official. Union leaders reported fees for the annual renewal of trade union registration and collective bargaining certificates were exorbitant.

The law provided for the right to conduct legal strikes but restricted this right for workers who provided essential services. Workers in export processing zones were not subject to these restrictions. The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations designated a list of essential services, which included many sectors outside of the essential services definition set by the International Labor Organization, such as ports, and harbors, and the Bank of Ghana. Parties to any labor dispute were required to resolve their differences within 72 hours. The right to strike could also be restricted for workers in private enterprises whose services were deemed essential to the survival of the enterprise by a union and an employer. A union could call a legal strike only if the parties failed to agree to voluntary arbitration or if the dispute remained unresolved at the end of arbitration proceedings.

The law provided a framework for collective bargaining, which included obtaining a collective bargaining certificate from the chief labor officer. In cases where there were multiple unions in an enterprise, the majority or plurality union would receive the certificate but had to consult with or, where appropriate, invite other unions to participate in negotiations. The certificate holder generally included representatives from the smaller

unions. Workers in decision-making or managerial roles were not provided the right to collective bargaining under the law, but they could join unions and enter labor negotiations with their employers.

The government effectively enforced applicable laws regarding freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the right to strike, but penalties were not commensurate with those for analogous violations such as civil rights violations. Penalties were rarely applied against violators, and specific penalties were usually not set forth, although employers who resorted to illegal lockouts could be required to pay workers' wages.

Some instances of subtle employer interference in union activities occurred.

## **Forced or Compulsory Labor**

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

## **Acceptable Work Conditions**

### **Wage and Hour Laws**

The law provided for a national minimum wage for some sectors of the economy, and the minimum wage exceeded the government's poverty line. The National Tripartite Committee increased the national daily minimum wage from 14.88 cedis (\$1.04) to 18.15 cedis (\$1.27), effective January 1.

There were widespread violations of the minimum wage law in the formal

economy across all sectors.

The maximum workweek was 40 hours, with a break of at least 48 consecutive hours every seven days. These provisions, however, did not apply to part-time workers, domestic workers in private homes, or others working in the informal sector. The law did not prescribe overtime rates and did not prohibit excessive compulsory overtime.

### **Occupational Safety and Health**

There were generally appropriate occupational safety and health (OSH) standards for the main industries in the country. The government did not proactively identify unsafe conditions and only responded to workers' OSH complaints. By law, workers could remove themselves from situations endangering their health or safety without jeopardy to their employment. The law only covered workers in the formal sector, who comprised approximately 14 percent of the labor force. The law reportedly provided inadequate coverage to workers due to its fragmentation and limited scope. Few workers believed they were free to exercise this right.

Violations of OSH standards were common in the mining sector, often in illegal mining. Civil society organizations stated corruption and lax enforcement allowed unsafe illegal mining practices to continue.

## **Wage, Hour, and OSH Enforcement**

The Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations set wage and overtime standards but did not effectively enforce the law. The government also did not effectively enforce health and safety regulations, which were set by a range of agencies in various industries, including the Food and Drugs Authority, the Roads Safety Commission, and the Inspectorate Division of the Minerals Commission. Penalties for violations were not commensurate with those for similar crimes, such as fraud or negligence, and penalties were never applied against violators. The government did not employ sufficient labor inspectors to enforce compliance. Although inspectors had the authority to make unannounced inspections, they were poorly trained and did not respond to violations effectively. Inspectors did not impose sanctions and were unable to provide data on how many violations they addressed. In most cases, inspectors gave advisory warnings to employers, with deadlines for taking corrective action.

Approximately 86 percent of the working population was employed in the informal sector, according to the Statistical Service. Most of these workers were self-employed. Some labor laws, such as legislation governing working hours, applied to the informal sector. Authorities did not enforce the minimum wage law in the informal sector. Employers widely flouted labor laws in the informal sector, and the government did not enforce them.

## **c. Disappearance and Abduction**

### **Disappearance**

There were no reports of enforced disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

### **Prolonged Detention without Charges**

The constitution and law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court, but the government sometimes disregarded these protections.

The law required detainees be brought before a court within 48 hours of arrest in the absence of a judicial warrant, but authorities frequently detained individuals for periods longer than 48 hours without filing charges or having a valid arrest warrant. The constitution granted a detained individual the right to be informed immediately, in a language the person understood, of the reasons for detention and the right to a lawyer. Most detainees, however, could not afford a lawyer. While the constitution granted the right to legal aid, the government often could not provide it due to the lack of available attorneys, lack of funds, and the high volume of cases.

The law required any detainee not tried within a “reasonable time” be

released either unconditionally or subject to conditions necessary to compel the person's appearance at a later court date, including use of bail. What qualified as reasonable time, however, remained undefined, and courts struggled with high case volumes and backlogs, and set bail at prohibitively high levels. The government, in partnership with civil society organizations, sought to reduce the number of individuals in pretrial detention by placing paralegals in some prisons to assist pretrial detainees, as well as by directing judges to visit prisons to review and take appropriate action on pretrial detainee cases.

There was a general practice of holding detainees without proper warrant or charge. In January, an individual was accused of engaging in "unnatural carnal knowledge" and held by police without evidence beyond the allowable 48 hours. He was transferred between police stations and threatened with court proceedings. The case was abandoned due to lack of evidence of a crime.

Lengthy pretrial detention was a serious problem. Officials detained some prisoners for indefinite periods by renewing warrants or simply allowing warrants to lapse while an investigation took place. Other factors contributing to delays in bringing to trial or releasing detainees included: police failure to investigate or follow up on cases; the loss of case files; slow trial proceedings marked by frequent adjournments; detainees' inability to meet bail conditions that were often set extremely high, even for minor

offenses; and inadequate legal representation for criminal defendants. In some instances, the length of pretrial detention exceeded the maximum sentence for the alleged crime. Reports showed some detainees had been held for up to 11 years.

#### **d. Violations in Religious Freedom**

See the Department of State's annual *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

#### **e. Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

### **Section 3. Security of the Person**

#### **a. Torture and Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

While the constitution and law prohibited such practices, there were credible reports police beat and otherwise abused suspected criminals prior to their transfer to government detention cells. Victims were often reluctant to file formal complaints. Police generally denied allegations or claimed the level of police force used was justified.

Reports of abuse and use of excessive force were widespread. For example, in February, media reported police in the capital city of Accra caused bodily injury to a suspect to extract a confession during an interrogation related to a robbery.

The law prohibited female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), but it was not effectively enforced. According to the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection, incidents of FGM/C were significantly higher in the north, particularly in Upper East Region, which had a prevalence rate of 27.8 percent, compared with the national rate of 3.8 percent.

## **b. Protection of Children**

### **Child Labor**

See the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings/>.

### **Child Marriage**

The minimum legal age for marriage was 18, however the government did not effectively enforce the law. Instances of child marriage were highest in the Northern, North East, Upper East, Savannah, and Volta regions.

The Child Marriage Unit of the Domestic Violence Secretariat of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection led governmental efforts to

combat child marriage. The ministry's *National Strategic Framework on Ending Child Marriage in Ghana (2017-2026)* prioritized interventions focused on strengthening government capacity to empower girls through education and skills development.

### **c. Protection to Refugees**

The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian offices in providing protection and assistance to refugees, returning refugees, or asylum seekers, as well as other persons of concern.

#### **Provision of First Asylum**

The law provided for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government operated a system for providing protection to refugees. The law allowed rejected asylum seekers to appeal and remain in the country until their appeal was adjudicated.

In September, the government granted permission for the Ghana Refugee Board and UNHCR to begin registering Burkinabe asylum seekers who were located at least 18 miles from the border. Previous government policy allowed refugee registration only for those individuals moving to one of two refugee settlements for Burkinabe in the Upper West and Upper East regions.

## **Resettlement**

The government supported refugees in pursuing durable solutions, including voluntary repatriation and a pathway to citizenship for some refugee groups, including Ivorians.

### **d. Acts of Antisemitism and Antisemitic Incitement**

The Jewish community had a few hundred members. There were no reports of antisemitic incidents.