

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**  
**ANNUAL REPORT ENTRIES 2005-2007<sup>1</sup>**

**GHANA**

**2007**

Head of state and government: John Agyekum Kufuor

Death penalty: abolitionist in practice

International Criminal Court: ratified

The government began paying reparations to victims of human rights violations under previous governments. The death penalty continued to be handed down in cases of murder and for treason. Violence and discrimination against women remained prevalent.

**Violence against women**

Women continued to be victims of domestic violence and female genital mutilation.

The Domestic Violence Bill was the subject of Parliamentary debate, during which a clause that would criminalize marital rape was dropped. The Bill had not become law by the end of the year.

**Forced evictions**

Forced evictions and internal displacement, particularly of marginalized people, continued to occur.

Hundreds of residents from the Dudzorme Island (in the Digya National Park) were forcibly evicted in late March and early April. Those evicted were not provided with alternative housing or with compensation. On 8 April, some of those evicted were reportedly forced into an overloaded ferry, which subsequently capsized, leaving around 30 people dead according to official sources, and many others unaccounted for.

**Death penalty**

Despite statements by government officials that the death penalty should be abolished, no concrete steps were taken towards abolition and death sentences continued to be handed down. No executions were carried out.

**The National Reconciliation Commission**

In October the government began paying reparations to some 2,000 Ghanaians who had suffered human rights abuses under former governments. The reparation payments were recommended by the National Reconciliation Commission, which was formed in 2002 to address human rights violations committed under various governments since Ghana gained independence in 1957.

**2006**

Head of state and government: John Agyekum Kufuor

Death penalty: retentionist

International Criminal Court: ratified

UN Women's Convention: ratified

Optional Protocol to UN Women's Convention: signed

The government released the final report of the National Reconciliation Commission with plans for implementing some of its recommendations. The President granted amnesty to 1,317 prisoners on humanitarian grounds. Violence against women continued to be widespread without progress in law reform.

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<sup>1</sup> The events listed in each year's report relate to events taken place the year before its publication

## **The National Reconciliation Commission**

On 22 April, the report of the National Reconciliation Commission, investigating past human rights abuses during Ghana's periods of unconstitutional government between 1957 and 1993, was made public by the government, together with a white paper accepting some of the recommendations and promising that a reparation and rehabilitation fund would be operational before the end of 2005. No recommendations had been implemented by the end of the year. The government issued an apology to all those who had been wronged by past governments.

The report concluded that the majority of human rights abuses were attributed to the unconstitutional governments. The recommendations included reparation for and rehabilitation of victims, and paid particular attention to rape and other sexual violence against women. Specifics included a formal presidential apology to victims of abuses by state agents, financial compensation, restitution of property, medical care, and the creation of trauma and counselling centres in hospitals. The report also recommended reconciliation and institutional reforms such as training on human rights for the police, judges and prison officials.

### **Violence against women**

Violence against women continued to be widespread, with violence in the family thought to affect one in three women. Civil society organizations discussed reform of abortion legislation and laws permitting marital rape, and some members of parliament advocated higher sentences for rape and defilement of women. However, no progress was made in passing the Domestic Violence Bill into law.

The Human Trafficking Law was passed by parliament in June; it had not received presidential assent by the end of the year. Ghana had not yet ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

## **2005**

Head of state and government: John Agyekum Kufuor

Death penalty: retentionist

International Criminal Court: ratified

UN Women's Convention: ratified

Optional Protocol to UN Women's Convention: signed

No death sentences were passed and there were no executions, although the death penalty remained on the statute books. A National Reconciliation Commission reported on human rights violations during Ghana's periods of unconstitutional government since 1957. A woman was imprisoned for practising female genital mutilation. A draft Domestic Violence Bill was still not tabled in parliament.

### **Background**

After elections in December, President Kufuor was re-elected.

### **The National Reconciliation Commission**

The National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) ended its hearings in July. Established by the government in 2002, initially for one year, its task was to compile a record of human rights violations committed during Ghana's periods of unconstitutional rule since independence in 1957, and to recommend reparations and reforms. Most of the witnesses were victims of human rights violations under the military governments headed by former President J.J. Rawlings. Many of the 2,000-plus testimonies that were heard spoke of summary executions, "disappearances", torture and ill-treatment. The NRC's report and recommendations were submitted to President Kufuor on 12 October but had not been made public by the end of 2004. The recommendations reportedly included reparations for about 3,000 victims and reforms of institutions including the security agencies.

### **Women's rights**

Despite being made a criminal offence in 1994, female genital mutilation continued to be practised, particularly in the north. In January, a 70-year-old woman from Koloko, Upper East Region, who had performed female genital mutilation on seven girls, was convicted and sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

A draft Domestic Violence Bill had not yet been tabled in Parliament by the end of 2004, despite wide support from women's organizations and other civil society groups. The bill aimed to strengthen official responses to complaints of violence against women and to broaden remedies available to the courts.