

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Ghana: Amnesty International welcomes Ghana's support of recommendations to improve conditions and reduce overcrowding in prisons but regrets Ghana's rejection of recommendations to decriminalize same-sex relations, and to combat the climate of homophobia and discrimination against LGBT persons.

Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Ghana

Amnesty International welcomes Ghana's support of recommendations to improve conditions and to reduce overcrowding in prisons, as well as its assurances that these are already being implemented.¹ According to Amnesty International's research, overcrowding is severe, sanitation inadequate, and food supplies and medical care scarce in Ghana's prisons. The organization urges the government to give immediate effect to these recommendations.

While Amnesty International welcomes Ghana's commitment to investigate cases of attacks on persons based on their sexual orientation or gender identity,² the organization is very disappointed at Ghana's rejection of recommendations to decriminalize same-sex relations, and to combat the climate of homophobia and discrimination against LGBT persons.³

Consensual same-sex conduct remains a crime in Ghana's Criminal Code, punishable by up to 25 years' imprisonment, and despite constitutional guarantees discrimination based on sexual orientation persists. Discriminatory attitudes are sometimes fuelled by statements by senior officials, such as, for example, in July 2011, when the Western Regional Minister encouraged people to inform on those they believed to be 'homosexual' and instructed the security forces to arrest the country's gay population.

Amnesty International notes that there was only one reference to the issue of housing rights in the review.⁴ This is an issue that deserves much more attention: Amnesty International has documented a range of human rights violations in the context of forced evictions and demolitions of informal settlements in Ghana. In Accra, where many live without security of tenure in informal settlements, including in Old Fadama, over 1,500 people were left homeless in January 2012 when Accra Metropolitan Authority demolished more than 500 houses and structures along the railway line. Residents were given only three days' notice to leave their homes, and were offered no compensation or alternative accommodation. Thousands more are at risk of forced eviction. We call on Ghana to issue a moratorium on mass evictions until legal and procedural safeguards are in place, in line with international human rights standards.

Background

The UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review of Ghana on 14 March 2013 during its 22nd session. Prior to the adoption of the review outcome, Amnesty International delivered the oral statement above. Amnesty International had earlier submitted information on the situation of human rights in *Ghana: Human rights shortcomings*

¹ A/HRC/22/6, recommendations 125.17-18 (Slovakia, Austria)

² Ibid, recommendations 124.8-9 (Canada, Belgium)

³ Ibid, recommendations 126.16-25 (France, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Norway, Netherlands, USA).

⁴ Ibid, recommendation 125.66 (Thailand)

in law and in practice: Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review (1 April 2012, Index Number: AFR 28/003/2012, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR28/003/2012/en>).

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