



## **Ghana – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 12 January 2010**

### **What procedures are in place to prevent violent deaths arising from chieftaincy disputes? How does the state protect citizens involved in chieftaincy disputes?**

In a section headed “Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life” the 2009 *US Department of State* country report on Ghana states:

“As in previous years, chieftaincy disputes resulted in deaths, injuries, and destruction of property. In Bawku, in the Upper East Region, an ongoing chieftaincy dispute led to violent outbreaks in January, May, and July. The violence caused an estimated 18 deaths and the destruction of property. The military and police were deployed to the region and the municipality was placed under curfew following the outbreaks. The curfew, which runs daily from 10:00 pm to 4:00 a.m., was extended at the end of the year. In May communal violence led to eight deaths and the burning of a village in Burkprugu-Yunyoo District, Northern Region. The violence followed a dispute over land. Police investigated the incident and a case is pending. Those arrested were out on bail at year's end.” (US Department of State (25 February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Ghana*)

This section of the report also states:

“In November 2007 a chieftaincy conflict erupted in Anloga in the Volta Region, resulting in at least five deaths, including one police officer and two persons who died in police custody. Rooted in a decade-long chieftaincy dispute, the disturbances arose from opposition to the installation of a new chief in the Anlo traditional area. Media and nongovernmental organization (NGO) sources reported that police used excessive force, intimidation, and beatings in order to control the violence and to extract information. Police reportedly arrested more than 75 suspects, including children and at least one elderly woman, immediately after the conflict erupted. There have been no further developments since the court adjourned the case in May. In November 2007 at least three persons were reportedly killed, and over 20 houses set ablaze, as a result of a chieftaincy dispute in Princes Town in the Western Region. A number of individuals were arrested and charged with rioting, fighting with offensive weapons, and causing damage.” (ibid)

Paragraph 3.10.4 (Sufficiency of protection) of the most recent operational guidance note from the *UK Home Office Border Agency* states:

“Though the police service came under criticism following incidents of brutality, corruption, and negligence in 2007, complaints of police abuse and misconduct

lodged by the public are investigated through the PIPS. Individuals with allegations of human rights violations, or grievances against government agencies or public officials can also seek redress through the CHRAJ. There is therefore no evidence that those in fear of being targeted as their community's next chieftain or high priest are not able to seek and receive adequate protection from the state authorities." (UK Home Office Border Agency (28 January 2009) *Operational Guidance Note – Ghana*, p.7)

An *IRIN News* report refers to the government response to a chieftaincy dispute in 2007 as follows:

"Four people were killed on 1 November in Ghana's Volta Region when violence erupted in a longstanding chieftaincy dispute. The government has sent in security forces and ordered a dusk-to-dawn curfew in the area. One of the dead was a police officer, reportedly kidnapped by one of the rival factions after the clash. His lacerated body was found the following morning after an all-night search, a police official told IRIN. The government has sent soldiers and at least 160 police officers to the area, which is in eastern Ghana." (IRIN News (2 November 2007) *Ghana: Four dead as chieftaincy dispute erupts in violence*)

An *IRIN News* report on the police response to an ethnic clash in 2008 states:

"Police have arrested some 72 people and imposed an 'indefinite' 22 hour curfew. Residents of Bawku are requesting police protection and many have asked to be escorted out of the town, the chief of police in the region, Ofose Mensah Gyeabour, told IRIN. Ghana's Minister of Interior, Kwamena Bartels, said police are effectively 'imprisoning the town's residents in their houses'. Free movement is only allowed between 7am and 9am." (IRIN News (6 May 2008) *Ghana: Deadly ethnic clashes in the north*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

#### **References:**

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