



Ghana – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 25 November 2010

Information on the treatment of Pentecostals in Ghana.

The opening sentences of the 2010 *US Department of State* report on religious freedom in Ghana state:

“The constitution provides for freedom of religion, and other laws and policies contributed to the generally free practice of religion. The government generally respected religious freedom in practice.” (US Department of State (17 November 2010) *Ghana: International Religious Freedom Report 2010*)

In “Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom” this report briefly refers to Pentecostals as follows:

“There were many incidences of human rights abuses at prayer camps, typically Pentecostal, where persons, often with mental illness, were chained for weeks, physically assaulted, and denied food and water in the name of removing evil spirits. Reports indicated that these practices extended to the Greater Accra, Eastern, Central, Western, Ashanti, Volta, and Brong Ahafo regions.” (ibid)

See also *Freedom House* annual report on Ghana which, in a section headed “Political Rights and Civil Liberties”, states:

“Both domestic and international human rights observers have reported a high incidence of exorcism-related physical abuse at Pentecostal prayer camps.” (Freedom House (24 June 2010) *Freedom in the World 2010 – Ghana*)

A record of a decision by the Australian *Refugee Review Tribunal*, in a section headed “Traditionalists’ stance” (paragraph 62), states:

“There is little information available on the position of traditionalists (i.e., traditional elders or followers of traditional religion) towards members of their community who are Christians. The prevalence of Christianity throughout Ghana is such that this is probably a reality for many traditionalists, and a lecturer at the University of Ghana, Abamfo Atiemo, has indicated that conflicts are more likely to arise when Christians come from groups with ‘exclusivist tendencies’ (for example Pentecostals) and refuse to participate in customary practices or obey rules imposed by traditional elders.” (Australia: Refugee Review Tribunal (10 June 2010) *RRT Case No. 1002062*)

A *Ghanaian Chronicle* article comments on an incident involving two rival Pentecostal factions as follows:

“The Chronicle gathered that on the fateful day in question, a group of thugs, led by Evangelist Micaiah, forced their way into the church premises, by scaling the wall of the church, and destroyed the padlock on the main gate. Two police officers, on guard duties at the church at that time, were reportedly pushed aside by the thugs.

The intruders are said to have taken over the church building, and assaulted some of the members, at a time church service was about to begin, with Evangelist Micaiah making a beeline for the unoccupied chair of the late Apostle Elder Enoch Ofori, and forcing himself in it. Police reinforcement, from the Buffalo Unit of the Police, was called in to save the situation, by restraining the attackers, but not after they (attackers) had inflicted various degrees of injuries on their victims.” (Ghanaian Chronicle (17 March 2008) *Ghana: Police Restrain Troublesome Evangelist*)

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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