



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Ghana

Ghana – GHA37099 – Political violence –
Elections – New Patriotic Party – National
Democratic Congress

11 August 2010

1. Is there any evidence of politically motivated violence by the National Democratic Congress (NDC) against members of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) either during the 1996 election campaign, or on an ongoing basis?

The 1996 Elections

There is no evidence of organised, politically motivated, violence carried out by NDC members against NPP supporters during the 1996 elections. Several sources report that election violence in 1996 was minimal. While some spontaneous clashes did occur around polling stations, no reports were located indicating significant violence. No information was located specifically indicating that NPP, or NDC, supporters were assassinated or murdered for political reasons. For a number of years, including 1996, the election process in Ghana has been described by several sources as one of the most democratic and orderly among nations in Africa.

A December 1996 DIAC¹ report addressing claims of persecution against individuals opposing the NDC found no basis in the claim. The DIAC report stated that a coalition of opposition party supporters challenging the NDC was able to campaign throughout all regional capitals in Ghana. The report also stated that no punitive action of any kind was taken by government authorities, or NDC members, against opposition supporters, and that opposition groups were openly and actively campaigning.

Another DIAC report² issued 10 October 1997 further addressed a series of protection claims made by Ghanaian applicants alleging harassment and harm to NPP supporters during the 1996 election period and afterwards. The report specifically stated that there had been no reports of politically motivated killings, or disappearances, either before or after the 7 December 1996 elections. In a question and answer format, the DIAC report states (bold added):

Q1. Are there reports of continuing mistreatment of NPP supporters, particularly those who uncovered electoral fraud and may be witnesses in pending trials?

Q2. Are there reports of politically-motivated killings and disappearances before and after the election?

Answer Cable

¹ DIAC Country Information Service 1996, *Country Information Report No. 1032/96 – Ghana: Ghana: Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR's) – CIS Information Request GHA3716*, (Sourced from DFAT advice of 10 December 1996), 10 December. (CISNET Ghana CX20948) – Attachment 1

² DIAC Country Information Service 1997, *Country Information Report No. 494/97 – Ghana: Ghana – Post-Election Human Rights Situation – CIS Information Request No. GHA-AA225 [GHA 4727]*, (Sourced from DFAT advice of 10 October 1997), 10 October. (CISNET Ghana CX25908) – Attachment 2

A1. There have been no reports or evidence of any mistreatment of NPP supporters.

The elections were judged by international observers...to be generally free, fair and transparent. There were reports of some minor irregularities during the elections but the political opposition, the media and the general public were free to criticise the electoral commission and the government.

A2. Since 1992 Ghana has become a multi-party democracy with all basic freedoms embodied in the 1992 constitution. Previous political prisoners and persons accused of politically-motivated crimes were given amnesty and Ghana's independent judiciary ensures that human rights enshrined in the constitution are fully respected. **There have been no reports of politically-motivated killings or disappearances before or after the elections**

Another DIAC report³ from 22 April 1996 stated that the political environment and run-up period to the elections in Ghana was an example of one of the most democratic and enlightened environments among nations in Africa. A July 1997 report issued by the US Department of State Office of Asylum Affairs⁴ stated that the 'NPP and other opposition parties remain active in Ghana, and mere membership in, or support of, such parties has not caused problems for Ghanaians who have returned home'. If a politically motivated killing did occur in 1996 and went unreported by the media, it could be characterised as an aberration and not a reflection of the prevailing political situation.

Political Violence Overview

In numerous reports⁵, Ghana is praised among African nations for consistently holding violence-free democratic elections, enabling the peaceful transfer of power back and forth between the NDC and NPP parties since 1993. After a new democratic constitution entered into force on 7 January 1993 establishing what is heralded as the Fourth Republic, the NDC won the first four-year term election and again in 1996, followed by the NPP in 2000 and again in 2004, followed by the NDC on 7 December 2008. NDC member Jerry Rawlings served as president from 1993 to 2001, followed by NPP member John Kufuor who served as president from 2001 to 2008. The current president is NDC member John Atta-Mills⁶

Most observers judge Ghana to be a stable, democratic country with a free press, independent judiciary, largely apolitical military, and an active civil society.⁷ Ghana's stability is often cited as an example for other African countries to follow, as a model of successful economic reforms and a progressive democratic society.⁸ The 2010 US Department of State *Country*

³ DIAC Country Information Service 1996, *Country Information Report No. 498/96 –Ghana* LG29762: Ghana: Political Situation, (Sourced from DFAT advice of 17 June 1996), 17 June. (CISNET Ghana CX17312) Attachment 4

⁴US Department of State 1997, *Ghana Profile of Asylum Claims & Country Conditions*, July, p. 4-5 [http://www.pards.org/paccc/Ghana \(July 1997\) Profile of Asylum Claims and Country Conditions Report PARDS Report-Specific Source and Reliability Assessment \(rev. December 13, 2009\) \(DOC, \).doc](http://www.pards.org/paccc/Ghana%20(July%201997)%20Profile%20of%20Asylum%20Claims%20and%20Country%20Conditions%20Report%20PARDS%20Report-Specific%20Source%20and%20Reliability%20Assessment%20(rev.%20December%2013,%202009).DOC_.doc) - Accessed 4 August 2010 – Attachment 3

⁵ Zounmenou, D. 2009, *Ghana's 2008 election: towards a consolidated democracy?*, Insitute for Security Studies website 27 July, pp. 1-2, 6-8 <http://www.issafrica.org/pgcontent.php?UID=3148> - Accessed 6 August 2010 – Attachment 5

⁶ 'Ghana Elections 2008' African Studies Centre website <http://www.ascleiden.nl/library/webdossiers/ghanaelections.aspx> - Accessed 4 August 2010 – Attachment 6

⁷ US Agency for International Development 2009, 'Ghana', November http://www.usaid.gov/locations/sub-saharan_africa/countries/ghana/ - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 7.

⁸ Coexistence International at Brandeis University 2009, *Country Studies Series: Ghana*, February, p.2 <http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/pubs/publications.html#country> – Accessed 8 April 2010 – Attachment 8

*Reports on Human Rights Practices*⁹ described the 2008 elections as free and fair, and noted that in 2009: ‘There were no reports that the government or its agents committed political killings’, and ‘There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances’. The same report acknowledges that violent clashes, however, do sometimes occur.

While some election and political party violence does occur, it is many times rooted in ethno-regional animosities. The NPP stronghold is in the South and is supported strongly by the Akan ethnic group. The NDC party is strongest in the North among the Ewe ethnic group.¹⁰ Another division along ethnocentric lines is between the Mamprusi tribe which generally supports the NPP, and the Kusasi tribe which generally supports the NDC. These divisions occasionally produce mostly non-lethal clashes especially in the northern region around the city of Bawku.¹¹

There is fierce election competition between the opposing NPP and NDC parties and there are several reports of each party accusing the other of harassment by authorities when either one is in power. Accusations of irregularities consist mainly of allegations of corruption and claims that parties in power order politically-motivated investigations into tax evasion of high profile opposition members.¹² Each party, when in power, has been accused of this practice.¹³

No reports were located claiming that the NDC is guilty of ordering or sanctioning political murders or violence. In most reported cases of political conflict, the severity of the event has not risen beyond inflammatory rhetoric and the defacing of political posters, as was widely reported in the 2008 elections. However, more serious incidents do occur, as in the 2008 election when opposing groups physically clashed outside registration offices in the northern city of Tamale and reportedly in some areas of the capital. There were reports in the aftermath of these confrontations that vigilante groups were formed to protect these centres.¹⁴ A European Union review of the 2008 elections, however, generally assessed political violence as low, stating ‘There were relatively few incidents of violence during rounds of elections and in nearly all of the country a peaceful environment was maintained’.¹⁵

Since the 2008 elections, there have been reports of threats, intimidation, and violence between NDC and NPP supporters, including one murder; however, they are generally sporadic and do not meet the definition of systematic or widespread political killings. Several incidents clearly began as personal disputes and then evolved into political conflicts. The press stories are difficult to corroborate from other sources, at times they contain conflicting

⁹ US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Ghana*, March – Attachment 9

¹⁰ Zounmenou, D. 2009, *Ghana’s 2008 election: towards a consolidated democracy?*, Insitute for Security Studies website 27 July, pp. 6-8 <http://www.issafrika.org/pgcontent.php?UID=3148> - Accessed 6 August 2010 - Attachment 5

¹¹ ‘Peace Education And Election-Related Violence In Ghana’s 2008 General Elections’ American Political Science Association Africa Workshops website <http://www.apsanet.org/~africaworkshops/media/Ziblim%20IddiWorking%20Paper.pdf> - Accessed 4 August 2010 – Attachment 10

¹² ‘Fact Sheet Ghana’ 2009, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy website, February http://www.nimd.org/documents/N/nimd_factsheet_ghana_def.pdf - Accessed 6 August 2010 – Attachment 11.

¹³ Country Watchlist: Ghana’ 2009, *Economist Intelligence Unit* - Business Africa, 16 May – Attachment 12

¹⁴ Zounmenou, D. 2009, *Ghana’s 2008 election: towards a consolidated democracy?*, Insitute for Security Studies website 27 July, p.8 <http://www.issafrika.org/pgcontent.php?UID=3148> - Accessed 6 August 2010 – Attachment 5

¹⁵ European Union Election Observatory Mission 2009, ‘Ghana Final Report Presidential and Parliamentary Elections 2008’, February p. 19 http://www.euomghana.org/EN/PDF/Final_report/EU_EOM_Final_Report_Ghana.pdf - Accessed 6 August 2010 – Attachment 13

information, and they are many times based on witness accounts. Examples of recent violence include the following:

- 21 April 2010 - article in the *Ghanaian Chronicle* reported allegations by the NPP that the NDC Government would “visit violence on... anybody perceived to be a leading member or supporter of the NPP” in the Bawku area.¹⁶
- 15 March 2010 - *Ghanian Chronicle* reported that NPP and NDC supporters pelted each other with stones outside a courthouse in Accra resulting in several casualties. The supporters were assembled to demonstrate over an ongoing court case involving an NPP radio panellist accused of making inflammatory remarks against former NDC President Jerry Rawlings.¹⁷
- 18 June 2009 - *The Statesman* reported allegations that since NDC won the elections in December 2008, their supporters were taking “the law into their hands, visiting an orgy of harassment on their counterparts in the NPP”. The report referenced mobs taking over lorry parks and markets and causing general disturbances.¹⁸
- 9 June 2009 - *The Daily Guide* posted on the *Modern Ghana* website reported that NDC supporters beat up NPP supporters in the Takoradi Market Circle (south west city of Takoradi) after a dispute. The article stated that the NDC supporters were wielding cutlasses, but there was no indication that they were actually used in the beatings.¹⁹
- 15 May 2009 - *The Daily Guide* reported that an NPP organizer in Techiman (central Ghana) was allegedly beaten to death by the son of the NDC chairman in that area; however, the incident had its roots in a family argument.²⁰
- 11 April 2009 - the *Media Foundation for West Africa* reported that a journalist in the Upper East region of Ghana claimed to have been assaulted by NDC supporters while he was photographing an attack on a man wearing a NPP shirt.²¹
- 22 February 2009 - *Ghana News Agency* reported seven houses and three vehicles were burnt in clashes between NDC and NPP supporters in Tamale (north central Ghana).²²
- 17-18 February 2009 - violence erupted in a meat market in Tamale after two butchers argued over unknown issues. Later in the evening, friends of each butcher assembled along political lines of NPP and NDC supporters and clashed in

¹⁶ Owusu, W. 2010 ‘NPP Warns Government’, *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 21 April
http://dailyguideghana.com/newd/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=8693&Itemid=243 - Accessed 27 April 2010 – Attachment 14

¹⁷ ‘Ghana: This is irresponsible behaviour’ 2010, *Ghanaian Chronicle*, All Africa website, 18 May.
<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/201003230937.html> - Accessed 26 March 2010 – Attachment 15

¹⁸ ‘NPP plans big demo: to protest NDC intimidation’, *The Statesman* (Ghana), 22 May – Attachment 16

¹⁹ Opoku, Emmanuel 2009, ‘NDC, NPP clash in Takoradi’, *Daily Guide*, 9 June, *Modern Ghana* website
<http://www.modernghana.com/news/220896/1/ndc-npp-clash-in-takoradi.html> – Accessed 29 July 2009 – Attachment 17

²⁰ ‘NPP organizer beaten to death’ 2009, *Daily Guide*, 3 June – Attachment 18

²¹ ‘Journalist William Jalulah assaulted by ruling party supporters’, *Media Foundation for West Africa*, 16 April – Attachment 19

²² ‘Seven houses burnt in renewed violence in Tamale’, *Ghana News Agency*, 23 February – Attachment 20

surrounding neighbourhoods. Youths and others joined in the ensuing mob violence resulting in one butcher (an NDC supporter) dying in hospital from injuries, six others wounded, and up to 20 houses set ablaze. This incident garnered national attention, and the government's Northern Regional Security Council investigation resulted in several arrests and a condemnation of the violence by both NDC and NPP party officials.²³

- 8 January 2009, in the aftermath of the December 2008 election polls supporters of the NPP took shelter at the NPP campaign office after reportedly being threatened by newly elected NDC officials in Accra.²⁴

All sources consulted indicate that a political environment which is generally free from political killings, but still occasionally marred by mob violence, has existed in Ghana for a number of years. A Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board report from October 2006²⁵ makes reference to some politically motivated intimidation and violence problems in Ghana in the past, but it mainly highlights the greatly improved situation as of 2006. The report states:

By and large, the treatment of political dissidents or members of opposition and their families in Ghana today has improved noticeably. This is a departure from the past when political dissidents in Ghana were badly treated. It is increasingly becoming difficult, if not impossible, to mobilize violence to brutalize sections of society who peacefully oppose the regime and its policies. Citizens are not only enfranchised, but are free to demonstrate, without police permit, against state and government policies. And the last year has witnessed many such public demonstrations by members of the opposition, which were free and without government reprisal.

Attachments

1. DIAC Country Information Service 1996, *Country Information Report No. 1032/96 – Ghana: Ghana: Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDR's) – CIS Information Request GHA3716*, (Sourced from DFAT advice of 10 December 1996), 10 December. (CISNET Ghana CX20948)
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3. US Department of State 1997, *Ghana Profile of Asylum Claims & Country Conditions*, July, p. 4-5 [http://www.pards.org/paccc/Ghana \(July 1997\) Profile of Asylum Claims and](http://www.pards.org/paccc/Ghana%20(July%201997)%20Profile%20of%20Asylum%20Claims%20and%20Country%20Conditions.pdf)

²³ Zoure, Stephen 2009, 'War in Tamale – 1 Dead, Houses Burnt', *Daily Guide*, 19 February, Modern Ghana website <http://www.modernghana.com/news/203137/1/war-in-tamale-1-dead-houses-burnt.html> – Accessed 7 July 2009 – Attachment 21; 'Minister gives ultimatum for surrendering of weapons' 2009, *The Ghanaian News Agency*, 23 February, Ghana HomePage website <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/education/artikel.php?ID=158146> – Accessed 7 July 2009 – Attachment 22 & Gyebi, Edmond 2009, 'Ghana: Tamale NDC Warns Supporters', *The Ghanaian Chronicle*, 19 March <http://allafrica.com/stories/> – Accessed 29 July 2009 – Attachment 23

²⁴ 'Ex-ruling NPP supporters allegedly flee attack by NDC supporters' 2009, *BBC Monitoring Africa*, 8 January – Attachment 24

²⁵ Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *GHA101615.E - Ghana: Treatment of political dissidents or members of the opposition and their family members (2004 - 2006)*, 23 October – Attachment 25

[Country Conditions Report PARDS Report-Specific Source and Reliability Assessment \(rev. December 13, 2009\) \(DOC, \).doc](#) - Accessed 4 August 2010.

4. DIAC Country Information Service 1996, *Country Information Report No. 498/96 – Ghana* LG29762: Ghana: Political Situation, (Sourced from DFAT advice of 17 June 1996), 17 June. (CISNET Ghana CX17312)
5. Zounmenou, D. 2009, *Ghana's 2008 election: towards a consolidated democracy?*, Insitute for Security Studies website 27 July, pp. 1-2, 6-8
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6. 'Ghana Elections 2008' African Studies Centre website
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7. US Agency for International Development 2009, 'Ghana', November
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8. Coexistence International at Brandeis University 2009, *Country Studies Series: Ghana*, February, p.2 <http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/pubs/publications.html#country> – Accessed 8 April 2010.
9. US Department of State 2010, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009 – Ghana*, March.
10. 'Peace Education And Election-Related Violence In Ghana's 2008 General Elections' American Political Science Association Africa Workshops website
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11. 'Fact Sheet Ghana' 2009, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy website, February http://www.nimd.org/documents/N/nimd_factsheet_ghana_def.pdf - Accessed 6 August 2010.
12. 'Country Watchlist: Ghana' 2009, *Economist Intelligence Unit - Business Africa*, 16 May. (FACTIVA)
13. European Union Election Observatory Mission 2009, 'Ghana Final Report Presidential and Parliamentary Elections 2008', February p. 19
http://www.eucomghana.org/EN/PDF/Final_report/EU_EOM_Final_Report_Ghana.pdf - Accessed 6 August 2010.
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16. 'NPP plans big demo: to protest NDC intimidation', *The Statesman* (Ghana), 22 May. (CISNET Ghana CX228165)

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18. 'NPP organizer beaten to death' 2009, *Daily Guide*, 3 June. (CISNET Ghana CX227518)
19. 'Journalist William Jalulah assaulted by ruling party supporters', *Media Foundation for West Africa*, 16 April. (CISNET Ghana CX224498)
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21. Zoure, Stephen 2009, 'War in Tamale – 1 Dead, Houses Burnt', *Daily Guide*, 19 February, Modern Ghana website <http://www.modernghana.com/news/203137/1/war-in-tamale1-dead-houses-burnt.html> – Accessed 7 July 2009.
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