



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)  
LEGAL AID BOARD

## **Ghana - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 8 April 2009**

### **Information on police in Ghana and whether they get involved in family matters**

The *US Department of State* reports:

"The police service received repeated criticism due to incidents of police brutality, corruption, and negligence. Impunity remained a problem. Delays in prosecuting suspects, rumors of police collaboration with criminals, and the widespread perception of police ineptitude contributed to an increase in vigilante violence during the year. There were also credible reports that police extorted money by acting as private debt collectors, by setting up illegal checkpoints, and by arresting citizens in exchange for bribes from detainees' disgruntled business associates." (US Department of State (25 February 2009) *Ghana - Country Report on Human Rights Practices – 2008*)

This report also states:

"Unless specifically called upon by DOVVSU, police seldom intervened in cases of domestic violence, in part due to a lack of counseling skills, shelter, and other resources to assist victims." (Ibid)

This report also states:

"The constitution and law prohibit such practices; however, there were credible reports that police beat and abused suspects, prisoners, demonstrators, and other citizens. Severe beatings of suspects in police custody reportedly occurred throughout the country but largely went unreported in official channels. In many cases, police denied allegations or claimed that force was justified by the circumstances.

The many cases of police brutality leading to deaths during the year led several NGOs, lawyers, and civil society organizations to publicly denounce the tendency of police to use excessive force and to call for the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to take action against those responsible." (Ibid)

The *Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada* states:

"According to an article in Accra Daily Mail, "[c]orruption in Ghana [is] so bad that one may think it has been institutionalized in the public sector" and "[m]ost police and prison officers are ranked the highest bribe takers" (2 June 2005). Similarly, Agence France-Presse (AFP) reports that police officers in Ghana, among other countries, are perceived as being "especially corrupt" (9 Dec. 2004; see also US

8 Mar. 2006). In a survey conducted by Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII), Transparency International's local branch (GII n.d.), 76.8 percent of respondents indicated that the Police Service was considered one of the top ten most corrupt institutions in Ghana (July 2005, 7)." (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2 October 2006) *Ghana: Reports of corruption and bribery inside the police force; procedure followed to file a complaint and recourse available; the state's attitude toward police corruption and how police handle personal feuds*)

The *US Department of State* reports:

"Corruption among law enforcement officials is an obstacle to effective anti-trafficking measures in Ghana. During the year an undercover journalist videotaped Ghanaian immigration officials accepting bribes to facilitate the trafficking of Nigerians victims to Europe. However, the official implicated is still employed by Ghana Immigration Services (GIS), but was transferred to a position outside Accra. The GIS is conducting an internal investigation into the case." (US Department of State (4 June 2008) *Trafficking in Persons Report 2008 – Ghana*)

*Freedom House* state in their report, *Freedom in the World*:

"Communal and ethnic violence occasionally flares in Ghana. The north of the country in particular is dominated by various tribal associations, many of which have ties to major political parties based in the south. However, in 2007 it was the Accra region in the south that experienced a series of riots in response to the NPP's alleged involvement in the nomination of a new chief to the Ga tribe. Police fired plastic bullets in an effort to disperse the rioters, but no one was seriously injured." (Freedom House (2 July 2008) *Freedom in the World – Ghana 2008*)

*Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative* report:

"Ninety two per cent of Ghanaians have paid a bribe to the police at some point. Every rank of the police service – from junior officers on traffic duty, to mid-ranking officers demanding extra cash from complainants, to senior officers skimming bags of cocaine off drug bust hauls – has been accused of rampant corruption. The case studies in this chapter set out examples of the different types of corruption that the police engage in and show the lack of true accountability across the police service.

In the junior ranks of the police, bribes are used to turn a blind eye or to grease the proper and efficient functioning of the police. Traffic management is a particular problem. In an opinion piece in Ghana's *Chronicle* newspaper, Augustina Akwei lamented that, "it is regrettable and a pity to see our police personnel who patrol our highways extorting money from drivers in the full glare of the public without shame instead of checking that traffic regulations are effectively observed by motorists".<sup>102</sup> In another example, in 2006, the *Graphic* newspaper reported that a Kasoa man had complained to his local police station that land he had purchased was being encroached. Four policeman arrived at the land following his complaint, but demanded 200,000 cedis payment

before they would complete their work. The complainant resisted, but eventually paid the bribe – and then the police dealt with the encroachment.<sup>103</sup> (Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, (7 December 2007) *The Police, The People, The Politics, Police accountability in Ghana 2007*)

*Business Anti-corruption* in January 2009 said in a survey:

“According to surveys, Ghanaians consider the Ghana Police Service to be one of the most corrupt and dishonest agencies in Ghana. The traffic police are known to extract unofficial fees directly from drivers. Although the police are widely perceived as one of the most corrupt institutions in the country, no effective mechanism to handle complaints of corruption against the police is in place. This means that police officers are rarely prosecuted, disciplined or dismissed. People rarely report corruption to the police through the criminal justice mechanism due to long bureaucratic procedures and a lack of legal protection for prosecution witnesses. Consequently, no cases of corruption have been prosecuted in the past 10 years through the criminal justice mechanism (prosecution is handled by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice and the Serious Fraud Office).” (Business Anti-corruption, (January 2009) *Ghana Country Profile*)

## References

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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.

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