

Discrimination

On 29 October, the Higher Administrative Court of Rheinland-Pfalz ruled that federal police officers had violated the constitutional principle of non-discrimination by subjecting a person to an identity check solely on base of his skin colour.

Amnesty International visits/reports

Germany: Legal provisions and political practices put persons at risk of human rights violations (EUR 23/002/2012)

Submission to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on Germany (EUR 23/003/2012)

GHANA

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Head of state and government: **John Dramani Mahama**
(replaced John Evans Atta Mills in December)

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Over 1,000 people were forcibly evicted from their homes in the capital, Accra. Thousands more remained at risk of forced eviction. Violence continued against people suspected of same-sex relationships, who still had little or no legal protection. There were no executions. The death penalty was still on the statute books, despite the government having accepted recommendations to abolish it. The criminal justice system remained slow.

Background

President John Atta Mills died in July. His deputy, John Dramani Mahama, was immediately sworn in as President. General elections were held in December 2012 and John Dramani Mahama was declared the winner. In June, the government published its White Paper in response to the Constitutional Review Commission's (CRC) final report. The government did not publish the final report itself. By the end of the year, the Freedom of Information bill had not become law.

Justice system

Court procedures were long and slow. Access to legal aid was limited or non-existent and some prisoners

spent years waiting to be tried. Prisons were overcrowded and failed to provide inmates with basic services, including medical care. In March, 200 prisoners were transferred to the maximum security Ankaful prison in an attempt to address overcrowding.

Death penalty

Twenty-seven men were sentenced to death. At the year's end, 166 people were on death row, including four women. No executions were carried out. In June, the government accepted the CRC's recommendation to abolish the death penalty. However, the death penalty remained on the statute books at the end of 2012.

Housing rights

In January 2012, the Accra Metropolitan Authority demolished around 500 houses and structures along Accra's railway line. One estimate suggested that over 1,500 people were left homeless. They were only given three days' notice to leave their communities, and were offered no compensation or alternative accommodation. Thousands more continued to be at risk of forced eviction.

Violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls remained rife, with nearly 10,000 cases reported to the Ghana police Domestic Violence Support Unit in 2012. Violence against women was thought to be under-reported, and not adequately addressed by the authorities.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

Sexual activity between consenting adults of the same sex remained a crime under Ghana's Criminal Code. Violence against people suspected of same-sex relationships continued. In March 2012, young people in Accra's James Town community disrupted a planned wedding ceremony between two women, and assaulted them and their guests. The women were later arrested and detained at the James Town Police station for "engaging in illegal practice". They were released after their relatives intervened.

The CRC's final report recommended that the country's Supreme Court should rule on whether Ghana should legalise same-sex acts. The government "took note" of the recommendation.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

In June, the Ghana Refugee Board announced plans to close the Buduburam refugee camp in Accra. It said an estimated 11,000 Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees were being registered for repatriation to their respective countries.

Amnesty International visits/reports

🚗 Amnesty International visited Ghana in April.

📖 'Prisoners are bottom of the pile': The human rights of inmates in Ghana (AFR 28/002/2012)

📖 Ghana: Human rights shortcomings in law and in practice – Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review (AFR 28/003/2012)

GREECE

HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Head of state:

Karolos Papoulias

Head of government: **Antonis Samaras (replaced Panagiotis Pikrammenos in June, who replaced Loukas Papademos in May)**

Allegations of human rights abuses by police, including torture and excessive use of force continued throughout the year. Migrants and asylum-seekers faced impediments in registering their asylum applications and were often detained in substandard conditions. Hate crime on the basis of race and ethnicity escalated dramatically.

Background

The economy was in crisis, and unemployment reached 26.8% in October. Further austerity measures were voted by Parliament in February and November, amid protests in Athens and other cities. In May, the European Committee on Social Rights found that austerity legislation relating to public sector workers violated various provisions of the European Social Charter.

Golden Dawn, a far right-wing party with an aggressive anti-migrant rhetoric, won 18 seats in the June parliamentary elections.

Excessive use of force

Allegations of the police using excessive force during demonstrations persisted.

■ In April, several journalists and photographers were attacked by riot police during protests held in Athens in memory of a 77-year-old retired pharmacist, who committed suicide. Marios Lolos, a photojournalist, suffered a serious skull fracture when a riot police officer beat him on the back of his head with a baton. No individual was arrested or charged for the attack.

■ On 5 August, riot police made excessive use of chemical irritants and reportedly fired rubber bullets and other impact rounds directly at peaceful protesters opposing gold mining operations in the Halkidiki region.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Allegations of torture and other ill-treatment against individuals including members of vulnerable groups such as migrants and asylum-seekers held in immigration detention persisted. Systemic problems leading to impunity remained, including the authorities' frequent failure to conduct prompt, thorough and impartial investigations and to ensure the right to effective remedy. In January, the European Court of Human Rights held that the rape with a truncheon of an irregular migrant by a coastguard in May 2001 amounted to torture (*Zontul v. Greece*). In August, the UN Human Rights Committee found that Greece failed to investigate the complaint of ill-treatment and discrimination by the police of a Greek Romani man in 1999 (*Katsaris v. Greece*).

■ In March, a Mixed Jury Appeal Court in Athens acquitted two police officers of causing bodily harm under the provision against torture in the Criminal Code to two refugees at the Aghios Panteleimon police station, Athens, in December 2004. The officers had been found guilty at first instance.

■ In October, serious allegations of torture of 15 anti-fascist protesters by police at the General Police Directorate in Athens on 30 September came to light. Supporters of the protesters, arrested on 1 October, also alleged that they were subjected to treatment amounting to torture at the Directorate. The authorities denied the allegations, but an investigating judge requested that the Public Prosecutor bring criminal charges against the police officers involved in the human rights violations of the protesters.

Refugees, asylum-seekers and migrants

Despite reported improvements at the appeal level of asylum determination procedures, Greece made little progress towards establishing a fair and effective