

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

**Research Response Number:** GHA33029  
**Country:** Ghana  
**Date:** 4 March 2008

Keywords: Ghana – Homosexuals – Salaga

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**Questions**

- 1. Please search for media articles of attacks or murders of homosexuals in Ghana.**
- 2. Please particularly search for media articles of attacks or murders of homosexuals in the vicinity of Salaga, particularly in October 2006.**
- 3. Please find background information about Salaga/East Gonja – population, economy, tribes, religion, languages, politics, any local conflicts**

**RESPONSE**

- 1. Please search for media articles of attacks or murders of homosexuals in Ghana.**

Few articles were found in the sources consulted reporting attacks on homosexuals in Ghana and no such incidents were found in respect of 2007. These reports are outlined below. The articles often do not give a clear indication when the attacks occurred. No information was found in the sources consulted on any murders of homosexuals in Ghana, although one source indicated that homosexuality can attract killings.

In March 2007 the *BBC News* reported an attack in August 2006 in the following terms:

In the experience of 23-year-old Joseph Hilary Afful, people do make their disapproval clear, sometimes in violent ways.

**Pointing to scars on his forehead, he describes how he and four friends were attacked last August [2006] in an Accra suburb, Chorkor.**

“We have to hide ourselves if even walking in the afternoon, someone can throw stones at you,” he said (Ryan, Orla 2007, ‘Ghana’s secret gay community’, *BBC News*, 14 March <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6445337.stm> – Accessed 15 August 2007 – Attachment 1).

A September 2006 news article referred to an incident which had occurred “some years ago”:

A caller on Eastern FM morning show last week Friday revealed how **a gay person died some few years ago in Suhum** and how its members turned up in their numbers to the town to mourn over that person’s death.

Accordingly, some Chiefs, opinion leaders and some concerned residents, raging over their activity, **quickly organized and attacked those gay and lesbians at the funeral ground with stones and sticks** which forced them to flee for their lives (Quaye, Stephen A. 2006, ‘Eastern region residents rage over gays, lesbians issue’, allAfrica.com website, source: Ghanaian Chronicle (Accra), 13 September <http://allafrica.com/stories/200609130838.html> – Accessed 15 October 2007 – Attachment 2).

In correspondence dated 22 August 2006 to the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board, the President of the Gays and Lesbian Association of Ghana (GALAG), who is also the Executive/National Director of the Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights Ghana (CEPEHR), provided the following information:

**In Ghana, homosexuality is “accepted” by certain communities (i.e., the Ga ethnic group) while other communities consider it a taboo and see it as “an abominable offence that attracts beating and even killing.”** Homosexuals face discrimination, name calling and stigma because of their sexual orientation. The President indicated that there have been cases in previous years where gay men were arrested because homosexuality is “illegal” in Ghana but that there has been no increase in the number of prosecutions. Lawyers were reluctant to take on such cases as their credibility would be questioned if they defended homosexuals. **The President stated that extortion of homosexuals was frequent** (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2006, *GHA101616.E – Ghana: Treatment of homosexuals by society and authorities and availability of state protection; names and activities of groups or associations promoting homosexual rights*, 2 October [http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index\\_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450505](http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/en/research/rir/index_e.htm?action=record.viewrec&gotorec=450505) – Accessed 15 August 2007 – Attachment 3).

A June 2005 *Ghanaian Chronicle* article on Prince Kweku MacDonald, a gay rights activist in Ghana, states that:

Beaten, harassed, and bereft of many fundamental human rights, Prince Kweku Macdonald refuses to give up his fight. He has suffered violence and discrimination at the hands of fellow Ghanaians for years, ever since people started suspecting that he might be gay (Jacques, Jaime and Gbolu, Florence 2005, ‘Social Justice – Same Sex, Different Rights’, *Ghanaian Chronicle*, 22 June, Behind the Mask website <http://www.mask.org.za/article.php?cat=ghana&id=255> – Accessed 15 August 2007 – Attachment 4).

A March 2005 article on the Behind the Mask website, a news website for gay and lesbian affairs in Africa, reports that a student at the University of Cape Coast was assaulted by four other students who suspected him of being homosexual. Although the article did not specify the date when the assault occurred, the students responsible received suspensions ranging from two to four semesters taking effect from the first semester of 2004/05 to the end of 2005/06 academic years (MacDonald, Prince 2005, ‘University students suspended for

attack’, Behind the Mask website, 1 March  
<http://www.mask.org.za/article.php?cat=ghana&id=251> – Accessed 28 February 2008 – Attachment 5).

A May 2004 news article which provides information on a gay activist named “Prince”, who may be Prince Kweku MacDonald mentioned above, refers to an undated incident as follows:

According to Prince, **gay men suffer “a lot of discrimination and abuse” in Ghana.** “I was ejected from my room because of the male visitors, and because I wasn’t interested in women,” he said. “People take advantage of the illegality and they use it to blackmail people,” he added.

In a recent 32-page report concerning homosexuality and human rights abuses in different African countries, Prince relates **how he was lured by a man he met to visit his store the next day. When he arrived he found that the man had left, only to return with a group of men who beat Prince and robbed him of his mobile phone and wallet.** According to Prince, the police refused to pursue the matter.

Prince said gays made easy victims for theft and blackmail because they were reluctant to go to the police. “People take advantage of the illegality and they use it to blackmail people,” he said (Baidoo, Patrick and Methot, Charles 2004, ‘Is Ghana Ready for Gay Rights?’, allAfrica.com website, source: Ghanaian Chronicle (Accra)  
<http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200405060257.html> – Accessed 28 February 2008 – Attachment 6).

This appears to be the same incident which was also reported in June 2004 as:

**It happened to me a couple of years ago. I met this guy on the beach. When we hit it off, I agreed to meet him at the market where he sold shoes. There, several men and women accused me of forcing their friend to have sex. They beat me and took everything I had, while loudly blaming gay people for causing AIDS in Ghana.** We were evil people, they said, who made God destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. They would not allow this to happen in Ghana. They would beat out of me the evil spirit of homosexuality.

When others at the market asked what was going on, they told them that I was a thief, and they all wanted to beat me, too. I prayed to God to save me. I was sure I was going to die.

Afterwards, I naively went to the police. My attackers told them I made a pass at their friend. The police took their statement, but sent them away when they couldn’t show any evidence. Then the officers offered to write my statement for me, but I quickly took the pen and started writing my own because I knew they might try to implicate me in some crime.

When I asked them to do something to get back my money and the other things that had been stolen, they threatened to lock me up. There aren’t any laws specifically against homosexuality in Ghana, but it is common for the police to use other laws against us, like one forbidding “unnatural sex.”

I let the matter drop, but then I was afraid to leave the police station. My attackers would probably have been waiting for me outside. The police let me leave by a back door. I was too ashamed to tell to anyone for a year that I had been beaten and robbed. I even tried to have “normal” sex, but it didn’t work (Prince 2004, ‘Gay in Ghana’, *The Gully Online Magazine*, 24 June [http://www.thegully.com/essays/gaymundo/040623\\_gay\\_life\\_ghana.html](http://www.thegully.com/essays/gaymundo/040623_gay_life_ghana.html) – Accessed 28 February 2008 – Attachment 7).

In a May 2004 article on Behind the Mask website it was reported that a man, Francis Osei, dressed as a woman lured a man, Solomon, to have sex with him. The article stated that:

When he [Solomon] tried to find out, Francis rushed to the bathroom. Solomon then raised an alarm, which attracted his neighbours. They found out, to their chagrin, that the supposed girl was infact (sic), a male wearing females clothing and a wig.

**Francis was then subjected to severe beatings by the crowd (sic) before they handed him over to the police** (Cobbinah, Mac-Darling 2004, 'Crowd attacks man in woman's dress', Behind the Mask website, 17 May <http://www.mask.org.za/article.php?cat=ghana&id=240> – Accessed 28 February 2008 – Attachment 8).

Of some interest is an April 2004 article in the *Korea Herald* which reports that:

...Ghana has never had a civil war, a badge of honor in conflict-prone sub-Saharan Africa, and three years ago it staged a peaceful transfer of power from one elected government to another. Although homosexuality remains taboo, gays seem safe and physical attacks against them are rare...(Zachary, G. Pascal 2004, 'Coming out in Africa', *Korea Herald*, 2 April – Attachment 9).

## **2. Please particularly search for media articles of attacks or murders of homosexuals in the vicinity of Salaga, particularly in October 2006.**

No information was found in the sources consulted on attacks or murders of homosexuals in the vicinity of Salaga.

## **3. Please find background information about Salaga/East Gonja – population, economy, tribes, religion, languages, politics, any local conflicts**

Salaga is the district capital of the East Gonja District in the Northern Region of Ghana ('Guide to Northern region' 2005, allAfrica.com website, source: Public Agenda, 3 June <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200506060812.html> – Accessed 6 November 2007 – Attachment 10; 'Districts Contact Details' (undated), Ghana Districts.com website <http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?dcontacts> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 11).

Note on the Ghana Districts website: According to its website, the Ghana Districts website is a network of media and information technology professionals promoting and developing local governance in Ghana. It is in public-private partnership with the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Environment in the development and management of the website ('About Us' (undated), Ghana Districts.com website <http://www.ghanadistricts.com/home/aboutus.php> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 12).

## **Population**

According to information accessed on the Ghana Districts.com website, a 2000 census puts the population of the East Gonja District at 174,500. Further information on the website estimates the population of Salaga at 18,973 ('Northern Region: East Gonja: Demographic Characteristics' (undated), Ghana Districts.com website

[http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&\\_sa=212](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&_sa=212) – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 13; ‘Tables’ linked to ‘Northern Region: East Gonja: Demographic Characteristics’ (undated), Ghana Districts.com website  
[http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&\\_sa=212](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&_sa=212),  
<http://www.ghanadistricts.com/pdfs/eastgonja%20demo.pdf> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 14).

## **Economy**

According to a 2005 article, in the Northern Region about 72% of the population is engaged in agriculture. The second largest group composes traders and then small-scale manufacturers and processors. In respect of East Gonja, the Ghana Districts website also states that the district population is predominantly rural with some 86.4% (2000 figures) located in rural communities. The proportion of the population located in urban communities is increasing (‘Guide to Northern region’ 2005, allAfrica.com website, source: Public Agenda, 3 June <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200506060812.html> – Accessed 6 November 2007 – Attachment 10; (‘Northern Region: East Gonja: Demographic Characteristics’ (undated), Ghana Districts.com website [http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&\\_sa=212](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&_sa=212) – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 13; ‘Tables’ linked to ‘Northern Region: East Gonja: Demographic Characteristics’ (undated), Ghana Districts.com website [http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&\\_sa=212](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&_sa=212),  
<http://www.ghanadistricts.com/pdfs/eastgonja%20demo.pdf> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 14).

## **Tribes**

Sources indicate that the three main ethnic groups in East Gonja District are the Gonjas, the Kokonmbas and the Nanumbas. Salaga is a principal Gonja town. For information on tribes around Salaga see question 3 in: RRT Research & Information Services 2007, *Research Response GHA32549*, 7 November – Attachment 15.

## **Religion**

According to information accessed on the Ghana Districts.com website, a 2000 census puts the population of three religious groupings in East Gonja District as: Muslims – 34.9%, Christians – 36.4%, “Traditional Religion” – 21.3% and other religions – 7.4% (‘Northern Region: East Gonja: Demographic Characteristics’ (undated), Ghana Districts.com website [http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&\\_sa=212](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&_sa=212) – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 13; ‘Tables’ linked to ‘Northern Region: East Gonja: Demographic Characteristics’ (undated), Ghana Districts.com website [http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&\\_sa=212](http://www.ghanadistricts.com/districts/?r=6&_sa=212),  
<http://www.ghanadistricts.com/pdfs/eastgonja%20demo.pdf> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 14).

## **Languages**

Bodomo writes in the *Nordic Journal of African Studies* that Ghana’s indigenous languages may be categorised into ten major language groups (more precisely language sub-groups). However, these groups do not conform to the regions of the country. Some groups contain very large numbers of mother-tongue speakers while others hardly number a hundred

thousand (Bodomo, Adams B. 1996, 'On Language and Development in Africa: The Case of Ghana', *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, p.35 <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol5num2/bodomo.pdf> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 16).

Gonja, the most prominent of the Guang group of languages, is concentrated in the towns Salaga and Bole. The Guang languages fall within the Volta-Comoe sub-branch of the Kwa group of languages. Attached is a map accessed on the Ethnologue website which shows where the Gonja language is spoken (Bodomo, Adams B. 1996, 'On Language and Development in Africa: The Case of Ghana', *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, p.37 <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol5num2/bodomo.pdf> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 16; Awedoba, A. K. 2006, 'The Peoples of Northern Ghana', National Commission on Culture (Government of Ghana) website, 22 May [http://www.ghanaculture.gov.gh/modules/mod\\_pdf.php?sectionid=593](http://www.ghanaculture.gov.gh/modules/mod_pdf.php?sectionid=593) – Accessed 6 November 2007 – Attachment 17; 'Languages of Ghana' 2004, SIL International, Ethnologue.com website [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_map.asp?name=GH&seq=10](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_map.asp?name=GH&seq=10) – Accessed 7 November 2007 – Attachment 18).

## Politics

Little information was found in the sources consulted on the politics around Salaga. In the national parliament the member for Salaga is Boniface Abubakar Saddique, who belongs to the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The NPP is the majority party in parliament. The Chief Executive of the East Gonja District is Abudu Amadu Musa ('The Legislature' 2007, Ghana Government website, 4 June <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/node/245/print> – Accessed 3 March 2008 – Attachment 19; 'Northern Region' in 'Chief Executives' (undated), Ghana Districts.com website <http://ghanadistricts.com/dces/> – Accessed 3 March 2008 – Attachment 20).

Of interest are two views on the role of ethnicity in politics in Ghana.

In a 1999 journal article Vehnämäki wrote that ethnicity is not considered a major issue in Ghana "which rarely makes politics tribalistic or ethnically-determined or even markedly ethnically-sensitive in Ghana" (Vehnämäki, Mika 1999, 'Culture and Economic Development in Ghana: The Conventional Wisdom Revisited', *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 8, No.1, pp.66 – <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol8num1/vehnamaki.pdf> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 21).

However, Kusimi et al. note that:

Furthermore, the ethnic elements are so entrenched in political structures in Ghana much so that, members of certain ethnic groups that are well represented in an incumbent government violate state laws on national security with impunity, resulting in indiscipline and lawlessness amongst the people...(Kusimi, John et al. 2006, 'Conflicts in Northern Ghana', *Asteriskos*, Vol. 1, No.2, p.222 [http://www.igesip.org/asteriskos/1\\_2/galego/art12.pdf](http://www.igesip.org/asteriskos/1_2/galego/art12.pdf) – Accessed 3 March 2008 – Attachment 22).

## Local conflicts

From the sources consulted the last major conflict in East Gonja appears to have occurred in 1994 between the Konkomba on the one hand and on the other, the Dagomba, Gonja and

Nanumba. The cause of the conflict is not clear in the sources consulted. One source, Vehnämäki, wrote that the conflict was over a local paramountcy, a type of local chieftancy, and associated land ownership. Another source, Kusimi et al., stated that a brawl over the price of a guinea fowl at Nakpayili, a village in northern Ghana, started the conflict. According to a 2002 article the conflict spilled over to Salaga and surrounding areas and that the three ethnic groups, the Gonjas, Kokonmbas and the Nanumbas, have been living in fear of one another since the conflict (Vehnämäki, Mika 1999, 'Culture and Economic Development in Ghana: The Conventional Wisdom Revisited', *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 8, No.1, footnote 11/p.66 <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/pdf-files/vol8num1/vehnamaki.pdf> – Accessed 29 February 2008 – Attachment 21; Kusimi, John et al. 2006, 'Conflicts in Northern Ghana', *asterikos*, Vol. 1, No.2, p.218,222 [http://www.igesip.org/asterikos/1\\_2/galego/art12.pdf](http://www.igesip.org/asterikos/1_2/galego/art12.pdf) – Accessed 3 March 2008 – Attachment 22; 'Warring Factions Hail Reconciliation Law' 2002, allAfrica.com website, source: Accra Mail, 16 January <http://allafrica.com/stories/printable/200201160595.html> – Accessed 6 November 2007 – Attachment 23).

More generally, a 2005 draft report on economic growth in northern Ghana, commissioned by the UK Department for International Development, states that:

**The threat of insecurity has hung over the north in a significant way since 1994.** Peace is a critical foundation for investment, savings and economic development. The absence of peace is a particular issue for the north of Ghana. Other regions are barely affected by insecurity. Insecurity in the Northern Region affects the UE [Upper East] and UW [Upper West]. **There are substantial obstacles to peace, in particular the increasing inability of governments in Accra to be seen as independent, neutral arbiters in what are essentially local disputes.** As with any intractable dispute, the Yendi crisis requires that both sides are prepared to make concessions in order to move on from the impasse. Given the record of clumsy political interventions in this continuing dispute, it would be much sounder if the parties to the dispute could reach a settlement themselves. The facilitation of a neutral party is probably required to bring this about. The Northern House of Chiefs, ECOWAS, a group of former colonial powers are examples of neutral interest groups which could have a favourable impact on the disputing parties. It should be possible for the disputing parties to identify and agree on a neutral facilitator, and/or for government to do this.

**There are other unresolved inter-ethnic tensions in the north, which have in the past erupted into war, and may in future again lead to violent conflict, which are currently receiving little if any public or governmental attention.** These are less immediately a constraint on investment, but developing a standing conflict-prevention and resolution mechanism independent of government would be advisable (Overseas Development Institute, London & Centre for Policy Analysis, Accra 2005, *Economic Growth in Northern Ghana*, [Draft for Consultation], 26 August, p.21 <http://www.cepa.org.gh/Economic-Growth-in-Northern-Ghana-200805.pdf> – Accessed 2008 – Attachment 24).

Kusimi et al. also write there is always ethnic tension and any quarrel between two people of different ethnic groups can escalate into large-scale confrontation. The consequences of conflicts in northern Ghana have been inimical on the lives of the people. Kusimi et al. continue, however, that these conflicts can also have positive ramifications (Kusimi, John et al. 2006, 'Conflicts in Northern Ghana', *asterikos*, Vol. 1, No.2, pp.222-223,225 [http://www.igesip.org/asterikos/1\\_2/galego/art12.pdf](http://www.igesip.org/asterikos/1_2/galego/art12.pdf) – Accessed 3 March 2008 – Attachment 22).

On the latter Kusimi et al. state:

Nonetheless, these conflicts also have positive ramifications. Usually after these conflicts, the social recognition and image of some 'minority ethnic groups' is enhanced within the wider society. For example the Konkomba became very popular especially among the other 'minority ethnic groups' who began to identify with the Konkombas for solidarity and support during future oppression from the 'majority' ruling ethnic groups. The Konkombas are now seen to have liberated themselves from the oppressive 'claws' of the 'majority' in whom administrative power of the region is concentrated. These conflicts have strengthened ethnic ties among all the ethnic groups bringing about tribal unification. These conflicts have also promoted political participation and inclusion of many 'minority ethnic groups'. The electorate now cast their votes to parliamentary candidates and sometimes presidential on ethnic lines reflecting ethnic cohesion and solidarity within groups. Soon after the 1994 conflict, the numerical representation of the Konkombas in parliament shot from 1 in 1994 to 8 in 2003, two of them in ministerial positions (Kusimi, John et al. 2006, 'Conflicts in Northern Ghana', *\*asterikos*, Vol. 1, No.2, pp.225-226 [http://www.igesip.org/asteriskos/1\\_2/galego/art12.pdf](http://www.igesip.org/asteriskos/1_2/galego/art12.pdf) – Accessed 3 March 2008 – Attachment 22).

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All Africa Global Media <http://allafrica.com/>  
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*Ghana News* <http://www.accra.com/>  
Ghana Review International <http://ghanareview.com/review/>  
*Ghana Palaver* <http://www.ghana-palaver.com/>  
*The Ghanaian Chronicle* <http://www.ghanaian-chronicle.com/>  
*The Ghanaian Observer* <http://www.ghanaianobserver.com/news/index.asp>  
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*Nordic Journal of African Studies* <http://www.njas.helsinki.fi/>

### Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)  
BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)  
REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)  
ISYS (RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)  
RRT Library Catalogue

## List of Attachments

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