

**Refugee Review Tribunal  
AUSTRALIA**

**RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE**

**Research Response Number:** GHA34725  
**Country:** Ghana  
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Keywords: Ghana – National Democratic Congress (NDC) – 2008 election – Ethnic conflict

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**Questions**

- 1. Please advise whether members of the Bosanga ethnic group are in conflict with members of Dagbani ethnic group in the northern provinces of Ghana.**
- 2. Please advise whether members of the Bosanga ethnic group are in conflict with members of Dagbani ethnic group in Accra, or it is just a regional conflict?**
- 3. Please provide information on the National Democratic Congress' (NDC):**
  - **History**
  - **Leaders and deputy leaders since inception**
  - **Performance at elections since inception**
- 4. Please provide information on the current government in Ghana:**
  - **No. of seats held by NDC**
  - **No. of seats held by NPP**
  - **No. of Ministerial positions held by NDC**
  - **No. of Ministerial positions held by NPP**
- 5. An ADOA is a Muslim prayer for the deceased attended by family and friends of the deceased. Is it correct that in Ghana the ADOA is held in two stages: a week after the person dies and again 40 days after the person dies?**

**RESPONSE**

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As a recent assessment states, although Ghana 'has been spared the violent ethnic conflicts and the civil wars that have plagued West Africa' ...it has had civilian and military dictatorship whose tenures were characterized by gross human rights violations that left indelible scars on the citizenry. Several outbreaks of ethnic and chieftaincy conflicts have

occurred over the years, as well as land disputes.’ The Akan group is the largest of the country’s ethnic groups, comprising about 49.1% of the population;

Others include: the Mole-Dagbani group (16.5%), Ewe (12.7%), Ga Adangbe (8.0%), the Guan (4.4%), Gurma group (3.9%), Grusi (2.8%), Mande-Busanga (1.1%), and others (1.5%). Each of these large groups is further divided into sub-ethnic groups. For example, the Akan group has more than twenty sub-ethnic divisions. Ghana has about ninety-two separate ethnic groups.<sup>5</sup> The Akan group’s majority status results in its dominance in the Ghanaian social fabric and control of the business sectors. Furthermore, the group’s common language, Akan (with minor different dialects), has become the most spoken local language in Ghana. The group also dominates national politics, where the perception from the non-Akan groups is that members of the Akan ethnic group are overly represented in government (Coexistence International at Brandeis University 2009, *Country Studies Series: Ghana*, February, <http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/pubs/publications.html#country> – Accessed 9 February 2009 – Attachment 1).

Kusimi and others review the Mole-Dagbani origins whose ancestors were ‘horsemen’ and migrant invaders from the northeast and northwest of Ghana who encountered so-called stateless indigenous groups:

These stateless peoples are often mentioned in current national political conversations as the ‘minor tribes’ in Northern Ghana. These ‘minor ethnic groups’ do not have defined territorial units and administrative systems because land was not considered a scarce resource. Decision-making and conflict resolutions in the past were in the hands of clan heads. They had Tendaanas, the Earth Priest and custodian of lands. It was during this rudimentary political system of organization that the aborigines found their area invaded by horsemen who were better organized administratively.

...

The Mole-Dagbani group speaks Mossi and Dagomba and all members of this group speak similar language. The Tellensi, Gurenshi and Nabdam inhabiting Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region in present day Ghana were collectively known as the Frafra in the colonial times because they share similar cultural traits. Other members of the group are the Dagomba, Dagarti, Kusasi, Nankanni, Mamprusi, Builsa, Wala, Mossi and Nanumba. The Gurma Group consisting of Konkomba, B’Moba and the Basare (acephalous society) inhabit the Ghana-Togo-Burkina Faso borderland. The third ethnic group is the Grusi/Kassen-Isal-speaking group, which includes the Isala/Sissala, and the Kassena, as well as the Tampolense, Vagala and Mo (Deghe). Lastly, the Guan group includes the Gonja, Nchumuru and Nawuri who inhabit East Gonja District (in present day Ghana, Fig.1). Additionally, fragmented groups such as the Chokosi and Busanga also exist. The Chokosi, who speak an Akan dialect similar to Nzima, inhabit a part of Dagomba District and are descendants of mercenaries hired by the Dagomba and the Mamprusi kingdoms in the 18th century. The Busanga inhabit the Kusasi area and speak Mande language. The main ethnic group lives across Burkina Faso (Kusimi, John et al. 2006, ‘Conflicts in Northern Ghana’, *\*asterikos*, Vol. 1, No.2, pp 211-212 - [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 2).

A number of commentators, including Tsikata and Seini, stress the importance of conflict over land, or in some instances an alleged north-south divide, as central to understanding ethnic conflict in Ghana, however conflict is seen to have a variety of bases;

[I]t is possible to identify different categories of continuous conflict, some of it violent. These include inter-ethnic conflicts, mostly centred on control over land and other resources and sovereignty issues, what Brukum (1995) has described as wars of emancipation or secession. A second category of conflicts are intra-ethnic conflicts partly overland ownership, competing

uses of land and the locating of institutions and services, but mostly over chieftaincy succession and conflicts between state institutions, such as the police and communities, over policing and law and order issues arising from communal conflicts and inter-personal disputes. There are also religious conflicts between Muslims, between Christians and Muslims, and between Christians and followers of traditional religious practices, conflicts between members of different political parties and between supporters of rival football clubs. The above classification does not take into account the fact that often, the violent disputes reported by the media have multiple causes and elements. Thus police-community violence could arise from the policing of a chieftaincy or inter-ethnic dispute and tap into existing mistrust of the police. In the same vein, an inter-ethnic dispute may be triggered by the locating of a facility by the District Assembly (Tsikata, Dzodzi & Seini, Wayo 2004, *Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana*, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, November, pp. 24-25, <http://www.crise.ox.ac.uk/pubs/workingpaper5.pdf> – Accessed 23 March 2009 (Attachment 3)).

The idea that the Mole-Dagbani is a unified entity has been rejected:

The Mole-Dagbani are however a very loose ethno-cultural grouping, which consists of about 10 relatively small ethnic sub-groups. The five largest Mole-Dagbani sub-groups are the Dagomba (with 4.3% of Ghana's population), Dagarte or Dagaba (3.7%), Namnan or Nabdom (2.4%), Kusasi (2.2%) and Mamprusi (1.1%). While these ethnic sub-groups have certain social and cultural institutions in common, they have very different histories, customs and traditions (Brukum 1995). Indeed, quite a few of them speak languages that are not intelligible to one another (Frempong 2001).

Another reason why it is inappropriate to consider the Mole-Dagbani as a single homogenous ethnic group is the conflictual and occasionally violent interaction between the sub-groups. These ethnic conflicts 'arise from several years of relegation of certain ethnic groups, so-called "minority" groups, to "second-rate citizens" in the traditional and political administration of the region' (Gyimah-Boadi and Asante 2006: 244). The most serious episode of inter-ethnic violence occurred in 1994 between the Nanumba and Kokomba and resulted in approximately 2,000 casualties. It is, however, important to note that these ethnic conflicts and clashes were only significant at the local level and did not have any far-reaching consequences at the national level (Langer, Arnim, 2007, *The Peaceful Management of Horizontal Inequalities in Ghana*, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, February, pp. 5,13, <http://www.crise.ox.ac.uk/pubs.shtml> - Accessed 15 April 2009 – Attachment 4).

The US Department of State in its most recent annual country information report notes that,

Although the government deemphasized the relevance of ethnic differences, its opponents complained that appointed senior government positions were dominated by Ashantis and other Akans at the expense of Ewes and northerners. President Kufuor and some of his ministers and close advisors were Ashanti, but the vice president and many ministers were of other ethnic origins. President Mills will name a new cabinet and senior administration in early 2009.

There were numerous small-scale conflicts within ethnic groups during the year, most of which related to chieftaincy and land use issues. Efforts by NGOs to encourage reconciliation continued during the year (US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – Ghana*, February, section 5, - Attachment 5 ).

### **3. Please provide information on the National Democratic Congress' (NDC):**

- **History**
- **Leaders and deputy leaders since inception**
- **Performance at elections since inception**

The National Democratic Congress which has won the 2008 election was formed in 1992 under the leadership of Jerry Rawlings. In the ensuing elections held in December that year, it won a majority of seats and Rawlings was installed as President of the newly named Fourth Republic in January 1993;

Opposition groups charged the NDC with intimidation during the presidential election in November 1992...and staged a boycott of the legislative elections the following month. Consequently, the NDC won 189 of the 200 parliamentary seats...In 1996 Rawlings was re-elected President with a virtually unchanged share of the vote, but the NDC's parliamentary strength was reduced to 133 seats after a campaign contested by the opposition parties.

...

In December 2000 Rawlings was ineligible to stand for re-election as President, having served two terms, and abided by the constitution. The incumbent vice-President, John Atta Mills, stood for election as NDC presidential candidate but was defeated by John Kufuor of the New Patriotic Party (NPP). The NDC (92 seats) was also defeated by the NPP (100 seats) in the simultaneous parliamentary election (Szajkowski, Bogdan (ed) 2005, *Political Parties of the World*, John Harper Publishing, London, p. 259 – Attachment 6).

Jerry Rawlings was created 'life chairman' of the NDC at its congress in December 1998 and its incumbent Vice-President since 1997, Prof John Evans Atta Mills, was declared the party's presidential candidate for the 2000 election. During 1999, a dissatisfied group unhappy with the choice of Mills and other developments, broke away to form the National Reform Party. In the December 2000 elections, the NPP won 100, the NDC 92, the People's National Convention (PNC) 3, the Convention People's Party (CPP) 1 and independents 4 of the 200 seats. Following a second round Presidential vote, John Kufour (NPP) defeated Mills in the December contest.

The 2004 election result is described thus:

The parliamentary and presidential elections were held as scheduled on 7 December 2004 and were conducted in a largely peaceful atmosphere. Kufuor was declared the winner of the presidential election on 9 December, after votes in 225 of the 230 constituencies had been counted. Final results, released by the EC on 1 January 2005, indicated that Kufuor had secured 52.4% of the valid votes cast, while Mills won 44.6%...In the parliamentary election the NPP won 128 seats, with 55.6% of the vote, while the NDC won 94 seats, the PNC four and the CPP three. The remaining seat was taken by an independent candidate. Voter turnout at the elections was recorded at 85.1%. International and independent internal observers praised the elections as being free, fair and peaceful (*Europa World Year Book 2008*, Routledge, London, Volume I, p. 2001 – Attachment 7).

The chairman of the NDC is Dr Kwabena Adjei (elected December 2005) preceded by Dr Obed Asamoah (elected April 2002); the general secretary is Josiah Aryeh. The previous chair was Issifu Ali (from 1993).

N.B. The NDC website is not accessible at present.

#### **4. Please provide information on the current government in Ghana:**

- **No. of seats held by NDC**
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- **No. of Ministerial positions held by NDC**
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A recent Research Response provides information on the December 2008 elections (RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response GHA34660*, 3 April – Attachment 8). The NDC won the election with 114 seats; the NPP won 107 (Electoral Commission of Ghana (undated), ‘2008 Results Summary’, <http://www.ec.gov.gh/node/134> - Accessed 15 April 2009 – Attachment 9). Parliament is responsible for approving government nominated ministers and deputy ministers as well as the 10 Regional Ministers, which have now been finalized and endorsed - Attachment 10). Regional Ministers are chosen to represent the ethnic diversity of the country and not restricted to the party with a parliamentary majority.

#### **5. An ADOA is a Muslim prayer for the deceased attended by family and friends of the deceased. Is it correct that in Ghana the ADOA is held in two stages: a week after the person dies and again 40 days after the person dies?**

A cross-cultural study of Akan funeral practice includes the following description of Ghana’s Akan funeral practice:

A funeral typically consists of five important moments or events. The one-week ceremony is when the family comes together one week after the death to decide when the funeral will be celebrated, the costs involved and the main organizers. Second is the ‘40-days’ ceremony in which a successor to the deceased is officially announced. Third is the funeral itself, which consists of the laying-in-state on Friday, the burial on Saturday and the church service on Sunday. Fourth is the closing of accounts when the family gets together to assess how much was spent and how much was received in donations. If there is a debt, it is decided who will carry the burden, if there is a profit, it is decided how it is distributed. Fifth is the one-year celebration that draws an official end to the mourning period (Mazzucato, Valentina, et al., ‘A transnational funeral: remittances, decisions and practices across national borders’ 2005, Institute of Statistical, Economic and Social Research, <http://www.issr.org/publications/older/> - Accessed 16 April 2009 – Attachment 11).

### **List of Sources Consulted**

#### Internet Sources:

#### **Government Information and Reports**

Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

#### **International News & Politics**

BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

The Times <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/global/>

The Economist <http://www.economist.co.uk>

#### **Non-Government Organisations**

Minority Rights Group International <http://www.minorityrights.org/>

#### **Region Specific Links**

All Africa.com <http://allafrica.com>  
Africa Confidential <http://www.africa-confidential.com/home>  
Ghana Electoral Commission [www.ec.gov.gh](http://www.ec.gov.gh)  
Government of Ghana website <http://www.ghana.gov.gh/>  
IRIN News <http://www.irinnews.org/>  
Africa Research Bulletin <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0001-9844>  
Ghana Web <http://www.ghanaweb.com/>  
**Search Engines**  
Webcrawler <http://www.webcrawler.com>  
Google Scholar <http://www.google.com>  
Clusty <http://www.clusty.com>  
Hakia <http://www.hakia.com>

#### Databases:

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

#### **List of Attachments**

1. Coexistence International at Brandeis University 2009, *Country Studies Series: Ghana*, February, <http://www.brandeis.edu/coexistence/pubs/publications.html#country> – Accessed 9 February 2009.
2. Kusimi, John et al. 2006, 'Conflicts in Northern Ghana', *\*asterikos*, Vol. 1, No.2, pp 211-212 - [http://www.igesip.org/asterikos/1\\_2/galego/art12.pdf](http://www.igesip.org/asterikos/1_2/galego/art12.pdf) – Accessed 3 March 2008.
3. Tsikata, Dzodzi & Seini, Wayo 2004, *Identities, Inequalities and Conflicts in Ghana*, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, November, pp. 24-25, <http://www.crise.ox.ac.uk/pubs/workingpaper5.pdf> – Accessed 23 March 2009.
4. Langer, Arnim, 2007, *The Peaceful Management of Horizontal Inequalities in Ghana*, Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity, February, pp. 5,13, <http://www.crise.ox.ac.uk/pubs.shtml> - Accessed 15 April 2009.
5. US Department of State 2009, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – Ghana*, February.
6. Szajkowski, Bogdan (ed) 2005, *Political Parties of the World*, John Harper Publishing, London. (MRT-RRT Library)
7. *Europa World Year Book* 2008, Routledge, London, Volume I. (MRT-RRT Library)

8. RRT Research & Information 2009, *Research Response GHA34660*, 3 April.
9. Electoral Commission of Ghana (undated), '2008 Results Summary', <http://www.ec.gov.gh/node/134> - Accessed 15 April 2009.
10. Government of Ghana (undated), List of Ministers and Regional Ministers, [http://www.ghana.gov.gh/ghana/list\\_ministers\\_and\\_regional\\_ministers.jsp\\_0](http://www.ghana.gov.gh/ghana/list_ministers_and_regional_ministers.jsp_0) - Accessed 15 April 2009.
11. Mazzucato, Valentina, et al., 'A transnational funeral: remittances, decisions and practices across national borders' 2005, Institute of Statistical, Economic and Social Research, <http://www.issr.org/publications/older/> - Accessed 16 April 2009.