

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 19 OF THE CONVENTION**

Concluding observations of the Committee against Torture
(Extracts for follow-up of CAT/C/GHA/CO/1)

GHANA

(...)

C. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

(...)

Fundamental legal safeguards

10. The Committee notes the measures adopted by the State party to ensure compliance with due process, including the right for all detainees to obtain immediate access to a counsel, to undergo a medical examination, to be informed immediately of their rights in a language they understand, and to appear before a judge within 48 hours of arrest. It also notes the establishment of pilot interrogation rooms in some police stations where fixed closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras have been installed. However, the Committee expresses concern about reports that police fail to bring suspects before a judge within 48 hours of arrest, and that some police officers allegedly sign remand warrants themselves and take suspects directly to prison. The Committee also expresses concern at the very limited number of legal aid defence lawyers which precludes many defendants from obtaining legal counsel. Furthermore, it is concerned at the content of sections 10 to 13 of the Police Service Instruction 171, which provides for medical examinations to be conducted under the control of Government Medical Officers, who shall be requested to be present during independent medical examinations (arts. 2, 11 and 12).

The State party should take effective measures to guarantee that the fundamental legal safeguards for persons detained by the police are respected, including the right to be promptly informed of reasons for arrest and of any charges against him or her, the right to appear before a judge within the time limit prescribed by law and the right to an independent medical examination or a doctor of their own choice.

The State party should also:

(...)

(c) Expand the number of legal aid defence lawyers;

- (d) **Ensure prompt registration of all persons deprived of their liberty and ensure that custody records at police and prison facilities are periodically inspected to make sure that they are being maintained in accordance with procedures established by law;**

(...)

Psychiatric facilities

17. The Committee is concerned at reports about the inadequate treatment of mental health patients and poor living conditions in psychiatric institutions, in particular at Accra Psychiatric Hospital. The Committee notes with concern the reports of severe overcrowding, lack of qualified staff and poor material and hygienic conditions in this psychiatric facility. It is also deeply concerned at the situation of persons admitted by reason of a court order, who have allegedly been abandoned for years. In this regard, the Committee notes with interest the information provided by the State party's delegation on existing proposals for expanding mental health facilities in the country, and on the draft mental health bill before Parliament, which would include an individual complaint system. The Committee is seriously concerned at reports regarding persons remaining in hospital long after they should have been discharged, for lack of appropriate after-care or alternative and secure settings. It takes note of the explanation given by the delegation that efforts to reintegrate persons declared fit faced a number of obstacles, including social stigma, but points out that this can never be held as a reason for not initiating alternative care facilities after hospitalization (art. 16).

The State party should:

(...)

- (d) **Alternative forms of treatment, especially community-based treatment, are developed in particular with a view of receiving persons discharged from hospitals.**

(...)

Harmful traditional practices

23. The Committee takes note of the positive actions of the Government in criminalizing harmful traditional practices, such as female genital mutilation and *trokosi* (ritual or customary slavery). It also notes the 25 per cent decrease in the number of reported cases of female genital mutilation between 1999 and 2010, although there were still a total of 123,000 reported cases during that period. The Committee remains concerned at the clear incompatibility between certain aspects of Ghana's customary law and traditional practices and the respect for fundamental rights and liberties, including the prohibition of torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In this regard, the Committee is concerned at reports that some women have been accused of practicing witchcraft, and subjected to severe violence, including mob violence, burning and lynching, and forced to leave their communities. Many such women have been sent to so-called "witch camps" through a system that lacks minimal due legal process, and from which the possibility of returning to society is uncertain. The Committee also expresses concern about

reports of cases of violence against widows who are often deprived of their inheritance and, in some cases, subjected to humiliating and abusive widowhood rites. The Committee regrets the lack of information on prosecutions and sentences imposed on perpetrators of such acts, as well as on assistance and compensation to the victims. It also regrets the lack of information on the steps taken to ensure that customary law in Ghana is not incompatible with the State party's obligations under the Convention (arts. 2 and 16).

The State party should:

(a) Strengthen its efforts to prevent and combat harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation, in particular in rural areas, and ensure that such acts are investigated and that the alleged perpetrators are prosecuted and convicted;

(...)

31. The Committee requests the State party to provide, within one year, follow-up information in response to the Committee's recommendations contained in paragraphs 10 (c) and (d), 17(d) and 23(a) of the present document.

(...)
