Country Advice
Ghana
18 March 2010

1. Please provide information on Bawku including demography, religious make-up and political leadership (including whether Kusasis or Mamprusis have more power, for example in the regional councils).

Demography

Bawku is the capital of Bawku Municipality and is located in the very upper east corner of Ghana. Bawku Municipality shares borders with the countries of Burkina Faso and the Republic of Togo, and is bounded by two other Ghana Districts; Bawku West and Garu–Tempane. According to Ghanadistricts.com, the estimated total population of Bawku Municipality is 205,849 (approximately 1% of the nation’s population). Population density is 169 persons per square kilometre and the population growth rate of the municipality is 1.1. Distribution of the population is 20 percent urban and 80 percent rural.¹

In the Bawku Municipality, the Kusasis form the largest ethnic group, followed by the Mamprusis, Bissas, and Moshies.² The Kusasis and Mamprusis are both ethnic subsets of the second largest ethnic group in Ghana called the Mole Dagbani, which in 2004 reportedly constituted approximately 17% of the population, or approximately 3 million people. The Mole Dagbanis are found mostly in the northern areas of Ghana, including the administrative districts of Upper West, Upper East, and Northern Region. In 2004, the Kusasi reportedly comprised 2.2% of the total population and the Mamprusi comprised 1.1% of the total population.³ Using these figures, the Kusasi population can be reasonably estimated to be approximately 375 000 and the Mamprusi at 187 000. Obviously, not all the Kusasi and Mamprusi live within the boundaries of the Bawku Municipality and they are found throughout the northern region.

The Bawku area (understood to include Bawku Municipality in this context) is characterized by low income and poverty. A 2003 analysis published for the Netherlands Institute of International Relations reported that this area experiences some of the lowest income levels in Ghana and that 80% of the population lives in extreme poverty. The

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same study reports that literacy levels are at approximately 26%. Despite these negative statistics, the population appears to be politically motivated, with 2000 voter registration numbers reflecting 95% of the eligible population.4

Religion

Precise figures for religious affiliation in Bawku Municipality could not be located. The latest national census was conducted by the last Ghana Housing and Population Census in 2000 and provided statistics for the Upper East regions where Bawku is located. In this region, traditional beliefs are the dominant religion (50%), followed by Christians (28%), and Muslim (22%).5 Across the entire northern region of Ghana, which includes Upper East and Upper West, Muslims comprise the largest group (56%), followed by traditional beliefs (25%) and Christians (19%).6

On a national level, Ghana is predominantly Christian (almost 70%) nationwide. A “significant number” of Christians and Muslims weave traditional, indigenous beliefs into their religious practices and there is no reporting indicating this is not the case in the Bawku area. Geographically, the majority of Muslims are found in northern areas (where Bawku is located) as well as in urban centres of the capital and other large cities. Christians are found throughout the nation and followers of traditional religions are most commonly found in rural areas.7

Political Leadership

Ghana is a constitutional democracy headed by a president. The legislative branch is a unicameral parliament with 230 members elected to four year terms representing all regions and districts. Ghana is divided into ten administrative regions, which are subdivided into 138 distinctive metropolitan, municipal and district assemblies. Bawku Municipality is one of nine districts in the Upper East Region. Each of the nine districts is headed by a Chief Executive. The incumbent for Bawku Municipality is Hon. Musah Abdulai. There are three Bawku Municipal Members of Parliament.8

Bawku Municipal District government

The Bawku Municipal District website states that “governance in the municipality is both modern and traditional” and this is provided by the joint governing structures of the

Municipal Assembly and Chief system. There are two parts of the Bawku Municipal Assembly; the General House and the Executive Committee. Structure and functions of each are summarized below:

The General House: This body consists of elected members, central government appointees, and members of parliament. This body meets at least three times a year to deliberate municipal issues, pass by-laws, decide the budget and confirm the president’s nominee for the position of Chief Executive of the municipality.

Executive Committee: This body consists of 16 members of the General House who sit on statutory, social, and infrastructure committees.

**Bawku Traditional Council (Chief system)**: This body is headed by the Paramount Chief of the Bawku Traditional Area, also known as the Bawku Naba. Members of the traditional authority are drawn from chiefs of “important settlements”. The Traditional Authority is responsible for matters pertaining to chieftaincy, culture, and traditions, and has representation in the Bawku Municipal Assembly. Kusasi and Mamprusi control of the Bawku Naba has changed several times since independence. The Paramountcy of Bawku has been held by the Kusasi Bawku Naba Asigri Abugrago Azoka II since 1984.

No information was located regarding the political power wielded by the either the Kusasi or the Mamprusi at the regional or local level. On a national level, the Mamprusi have largely supported the New Patriotic Party while the Kusasis have generally supported the National Democratic Congress. Current President John Evan Atta Mills took office January 7, 2009 when his National Democratic Congress (NDC) political party narrowly defeated the New Patriotic Party (NPP) candidate in an election runoff held December 28, 2008. This divergent voting pattern among Kusasis and Mamprusi has produced the potential for political violence along national party lines. In the last election some northern areas strongholds of both parties were “no go” areas for opposition candidates to campaign.

Political competition is almost always linked to chieftaincy issues and land disputes, as opposed to religious differences. Since Ghana’s independence, the Kusasi and Mamprusi have variously supported political and opposition parties in order to bolster the political power of their ethnic chiefs through the Traditional Council.

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2. **Please provide information on treatment of Christians by Mamprusis.**

No information was found regarding the treatment of Christians by Mamprusis. Religious differences among the Bawku population are not necessarily a source of division and there is very little current information addressing this issue. A paper produced for the European Centre for Conflict Prevention website in 1999 reported that religious differences had manifested more prominently in the 1990s as Christian missionary activity had been more successful among the Kusasi, more so than among the Mamprusi.\(^{13}\) Most reporting on religion supports this observation, but no precise statistics could be located. The same source states that Islamic influence seem to be strongest among leading families while traditional religions still have the largest number of followers. Many villagers practice a mix of religious traditions. A report dated 1999 states that “religious differences are rarely a cause for conflict.”\(^{14}\) It is plausible that the mixture of religions among the two ethnic groups prevents religion from being at the root of clashes.

The vast majority of reporting on conflict between Kusasi and Mamprusi is limited to differences of ethnicity and tribal affiliation and not religion. While there are regularly occurring reports of clashes or incidents between Kusasi and Mamprusi, no reports were located in the last couple of years attributing these incidents solely to religious issues. An illustration of this distinction is a *BBC News* article from 5 June 2008 recounting a violent incident in Bawku that began when a Kusasi man left a mosque and was shot dead. Three more people were killed, thirty people were arrested, and a 24 hour curfew was imposed. While the circumstances of this report, specifically including the location of the incident at a mosque, could signal a religious angle to the incident, the headline was “Tribal Clash” and notably, there were no religious overtones to this story.

3. **Please provide any information on mistreatment/harm of Christians who have converted from Islam, by other Kusasis, Mamprusis or the government.**

No information was located regarding harm to Christian converts. The Ghana constitution provides for freedom of religion and the consensus from most sources is that this right is generally respected in practice. While it is plausible that incidents of violence against evangelical individuals and events in predominantly Muslim areas do occur, most sources indicate that there is no pattern of violence, or government-directed campaign, against Christian converts in a nation that is 70% Christian.

According to the UK Home Office’s 2009 operational guidance note for Ghana, “some applicants may make an asylum and/or human rights claim based on societal discrimination amounting to persecution at the hands of Muslims due to them being Christians or converts to Christianity.” The operational guidance note, however, further stipulates that “there is therefore no evidence that Christians or converts to Christianity would not be able to seek and receive adequate protection from the state authorities were

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they to face societal discrimination or ill-treatment at the hands of Muslims or members of other religious groups.” The operational guidance note provides the following information regarding freedom of religion:

3.7.3 The Constitution provides for freedom of religion and President Kufuor’s Government generally respected this right in practice. According to the U.S. Department of State, there were no reports between July 2007 and June 2008 of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Kufuor’s Government reportedly also took steps to promote interfaith understanding during this period.13 John Atta Mills was sworn in as President on 7 January 2009. There is no evidence to suggest that the new regime will not respect freedom of religion.15

The 2009 US Department of State International Religious Freedom Report agrees with this general assessment, reporting that the government generally respected freedom of religion in practice. The report does not contain any references to the mistreatment of Christians or Christian converts.16

On a national level, the predominance of Christianity among the population has actually led to some claims from Muslims that they experience social and political exclusion because of the pervasiveness of Christianity in many aspects of society. These include Christian oriented prayers in public settings and many Christian slogans and symbols.17 It is less likely that these anti-Islam experiences occur in the northern reaches of Ghana.

4. Is there evidence of discrimination of Kusasis by Mamprusis, or is the information primarily that there is continuing conflict between the two groups?

The divisive relationship between the Kusasi and Mamprusi is most accurately characterised as a conflict between the two groups rather than a discriminatory situation. All accounts located regarding Kusasis and Mamprusi used the term “conflict” to describe the contentious issues, incidents, and unsettled situations involving these two groups. There may be elements of discrimination, but the Kusasi and Mamprusi are engaged in ethnic rivalries and chieftaincy competition issues that go beyond discrimination.

Conflict between the Mamprusi and Kusasi has a long history. One account traces hostilities to a battle in pre-colonial periods that occurred in 1895 after a Mamprusi was insulted by a Kusasi. Over the last century there have been numerous incidents, hostilities, battles, murders and assaults.18 The list of contentious issues which spark violence is wide-ranging and over the last ten years alone has included political and economic issues such as chieftaincy, land, markets, names of places, economic transactions that have gone badly, etc. This is not say that all contentious issues end in bloodshed.

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Violent incidents pitting Kusasis against Mampruis occur frequently in the Bawku region. There are numerous accounts wherein a dispute or a single attack on an individual spirals into a major clash between supporter of either Mamprusi or Kusasi, leaving scores wounded or dead. For example, a dispute over the theft of a horse in 2008 resulted in 17 people killed when Mamprusis and Kusasis clashed in resulting violence.  

Discrimination is not a term used in outside government or media reports regarding the conflict between Kasusis and Mampruis. A 2009 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade report states that the “conflict between Mamprusis and Kusasis as seen in Bawku is not pervasive throughout Ghana, but isolated to the Bawku area”  

The UK Home Office’s 2009 operational guidance note for Ghana states that “there are numerous small-scale conflicts within ethnic groups, most of which are related to chieftaincy and land use issues…There were several violent clashes between Kusasi and Mamprusi tribesmen in northern Ghana in 2008.” In 2009 Freedom House also characterized the Kasusi and Mamprusi conflict as intertribal rivalry, stating:

Intertribal clashes increased in the north during 2008. Rivalry between the Kusasi and Mamprusi tribes led to some 15 deaths and a curfew and weapons ban in the Bawku region for much of the year.

5. Deleted.

6. What information is there of affiliation between the Mamprusi, political leaders, army and police in the northern Ghana areas such as Bawku?

Political Leaders

The majority of reporting on the northern ethnic conflict and approach by national leadership indicates that most leaders and national institutions are striving to appear neutral. On a national level, there are far more reports of the government straddling and attempting to deal with the ethnic divide of north and south Ghana. There appears to be a genuine national government approach to appearing neutral and defusing regional conflicts such as the one in Bawku. That said, there are some reports indicating that there is a general consensus that Kusasis are NDC supporters and Mampruis support the NPP. Some clashes may occur as a result of political differences at regional rallies for each national party, but ethnic and tribal differences are likely to emerge as the overarching


root or cause of any incident. In press and media accounts of violent incidents at festivals and market places, political differences are many times mentioned as a possible catalyst of violence, but generally only as a related issue; ethnic and tribal divisions and competitions are almost always the overarching cause. 24

Army

Very few reports in the media were located that alleged, or implied, that the military sided with one ethnic group over another one. If the military was taking sides, or enabling one group to dominate another, it would be reasonable to expect that the media would be rife with allegations and accusations. Illustrative of this trend, is a 2009 article from The Chronicle, a Ghanaian news source, which described a Kasusi/Mamprusi incident very briefly and stated that “some of the populace involved an incident claimed security officers belonged to one group or another”, and no further comment or space in the article was devoted to this contention. 25

Police

No information was located indicating that the police collude with Mamprusi tribal members against Kusasi tribal members. According to a 2009 UK Home Office operational guidance note for Ghana, “there is no evidence that ethnic group/tribal members would not be able to seek and receive adequate protection from the state authorities were they to face ill-treatment at the hands of rival ethnic groups or tribes.” Complaints against police misconduct are investigated by the Police Intelligence and Professional Standards Unit and complaints of human rights abuses or misconduct by government agencies are investigated by the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice. The same report states that inter-ethnic clashes are sporadic and usually quickly subdued by state authorities. 26 Media reports generally confirm this assessment that police respond and gain control over incidents though conflicts seem to continually erupt. Reports criticised the police for brutality, corruption, and negligence, but no reports were located regarding strong affiliation with Mamprusi or discrimination against Kusasi. Criticism of police intervention in the Bawku conflict more often than not involves allegations of corruption, rather than taking sides with either ethnic group.

7. Deleted.

8. Do you have any brief information on the church groups Lighthouse Chapel International (Tamale) or Oil Field International Ministries and the type of Christianity they practice?

Lighthouse Chapel International

Lighthouse Chapel International church can be characterized as Pentecostal and Charismatic in its beliefs and practices. In 2007, Ghana Web reported Bishop Dag Heward-Mills founded Lighthouse Chapel International and describes charismatic worship as involving ecstatic experiences, shouting, dancing, healings, prophecy, and speaking in tongues. The article reports that Ghanaian charismatic churches are gaining in popularity and increasingly establishing branches overseas.

The Lighthouse Chapel website describes its activities as follows:

The Lighthouse Chapel International was founded by the presiding bishop, Rt Rev. Dag Heward Mills. It is a bible based church which has a vision of fulfilling the great commission by winning the lost at any cost, planting churches wherever there are people and training Christians to do ministry work at all levels.

Since its inception in 1988, the church has grown to over 800 parishes in 50 countries across the world. Presently, there are established missions in many African countries, as well as Europe, Asia, the United States, the Caribbean, Canada, South America and Australia. The head quarters, also known as the Qodesh (God’s Holy Hill) is in Accra Ghana.

According to the website, there are 37 branches of the Lighthouse Chapel International church in Ghana, including one in Bawku. A branch may be very small and meet in community centres, vocational schools, homes, cafeterias, etc. Detailed maps and directions are provided for members to find each location. There is a branch located in Bawku, which holds meetings in a high school classroom. Directions and a link to a Google map from the website is provided as an attachment.

**Oil Field International Ministries**

No information was located regarding Oil Field International Ministries.

**Attachments**


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18. Deleted.


