



# GHANA



“States parties in focus” is a series of CTI blogs, prepared by the CTI Secretariat, and approved by the portrayed Government, with a view to sharing inspiration and experiences with other States that are considering ratifying the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (UNCAT) and/or its Optional Protocol (OPCAT).

Ratifying and implementing the UN Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol support institution building, the rule of law and the fair and effective administration of justice. Ghana ratified the UN Convention against Torture in 2000, and in 2016, joined UNCAT’s Optional Protocol. It is also a party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights.<sup>1</sup>

For Ghana, these instruments have inspired changes to government policy and practice in a number of key areas. H.E. Ambassador Ramses Joseph Cleland, Permanent Representative of Ghana to the UN in Geneva, has noted:

“ [Ratifying and implementing the UN Convention against Torture] has helped us professionalise our police service, made our justice delivery system more efficient, and triggered much needed prison sector reforms to better promote and protect the rights of all detainees.”

## Cooperation with UN torture prevention bodies

Ghana has found that cooperating with the UN torture prevention bodies has helped identify areas for improvement and led to changes. Ghana has twice cooperated with the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, who visited the country in 2013 and 2015, with the Government welcoming his recommendations and using them to inform policy-making. In May-June 2019, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture carried out a visit to Ghana, to advise on the establishment of a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) and to examine the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty.

## Building a safe and dignified prison system

In many countries, prisons are frequently under-funded, yet they are also sites of potential reputational risk for governments if not prioritised.

In 2015, the TV documentary “Locked and Forgotten” exposed Ghana’s dire prison conditions, prompting a public outcry calling for reforms. This call for reforms, together with the recommendations received by the Special Rapporteur on Torture, prompted Ghana to embark on an ambitious process of prison reform that is ongoing, with the aim to reduce overcrowding, improve conditions and better safeguards prisoners’ rights, including the right to be free from torture and ill-treatment. The Prisons Service Act 1972 expressly forbids the use of torture and cruelty to prisoners, reinforcing Ghana’s constitutional prohibition.

## Investment and coordination

Some of the successful measures that Ghana has put in place include:

- ✓ Delivering human rights training for prison staff. Ghana’s Prisons Service has developed training manuals for prison officials with assistance from the UN Development Programme, in an effort to sensitise officials to better respect prisoners’ rights.
- ✓ The “Justice for All” programme, a system of in-prison court sittings, which managed to reduce the population of pre-trial prisoners from 30.6% in 2007 to 14.1% in 2018. The reduction was reinforced by a 2016 Supreme Court ruling that ordered that bail (release on conditions) be applicable to some additional offences.
- ✓ The “Open Camp Prison” programme, an initiative to house low-risk prisoners in separate camps in order to decongest prison facilities. Prisoners can engage in agricultural work, allowing for their social reintegration upon completion of their prison sentences.

<sup>1</sup> Ghana ratified UNCAT on 7 September 2000. On 23 September 2016, Ghana ratified the Optional Protocol to UNCAT, which it had already signed in 2006. Ghana has been a party to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights since 1 March 1989.

- ✓ The Prison Connectivity Project is one of the interventions of the Ghana Investment Fund for Electronic Communications (GIFEC), which aims to extend Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to prisoners. Its purpose is to provide basic training in computer use as well as ICT to prisoners. The development of the programme for ICT training dovetails into the Ghanaian government's current policy to extend formal classroom educational programmes to prisons.

Ghana continues to investigate and invest in the best ways to relieve pressures on its correctional services.

## Promoting regional universality in Africa

Ghana, as a Core State of the CTI, appreciates the challenges across Africa to put in place systems and procedures to prevent and respond to torture and ill-treatment, yet sees great opportunities when these measures are guided by the UN Convention against Torture and related instruments. With almost all African countries now party to the Convention, there is great hope across the continent.

Ghana's Ambassador to the Arab Republic of Egypt, H.E. Dr. Winfred Nii Okai Hammond, speaking at an African Commission event in April 2019, highlighted:

“ At CTI, we strongly believe that regional universality of UNCAT ratification in Africa will put all countries in a better position to minimise risks of torture and similar ill-treatment.”<sup>2</sup>

## CTI support for States

For those States interested in how the CTI can support their efforts towards ratification and/or implementation of UNCAT, please contact [info@cti2024.org](mailto:info@cti2024.org). Other country experiences are available here: <https://cti2024.org/en/cti-blog/>.

**CTI Secretariat**  
April 2020

---

<sup>2</sup> H.E. Ambassador was speaking at a plenary discussion on “Supporting State action against torture and ill-treatment in Africa”, co-organised by CTI, during the 64th ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, held in in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, on 27 April 2019.