



NEWS SITUATION TRACKING

At least 10 More Killings Confirmed in Recurrent Bawku Attacks

Location: Bawku, Upper East Region

Issue: Recurrent Attacks in Bawku

Date: February 06, 2023



Source: Center for Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Services, University of Ghana (Edited for purpose)

COMMUNITY PROFILING

Basic Demography and Geography of Hotspots:

The Bawku Municipality has a population of 119,458 persons, with the males being 58,029 (48.58 percent) and females 61,429 (51.42 percent).¹

The municipality has a total land area of 247.23720 sq.km and it is located in the Upper East Region, approximately between latitudes 11° 11" and 10° 40" North and longitude 0° 18" W and 0° 6" E in the northeastern corner of the region. It shares boundaries with Pusiga District to the North, Binduri District to the South, Garu-Tempene District to the East and Bawku West to the West.²

The municipality is underlain mainly by Birrimian and granite rock formations. The topography along the basins of the White Volta River and its tributaries is generally low and slightly undulating with heights of 120-150 metres above sea level. The rest of the municipality consists of a series of plateau surfaces.³

Significance of the State:

¹ https://www.citypopulation.de/en/ghana/admin/upper_east/0909__bawku_municipal/

² Ghana Statistical Service Information

³ <https://mofa.gov.gh/site/directorates/district-directorates/upper-east-region/253-bawku-municipal>

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Economy:

Agriculture is the dominant occupation of the people of the municipality, accounting for about 47.0 percent of the total occupation in the municipality. The major crops grown are millet, sorghum, maize, rice, groundnuts, leafy vegetables, pepper, watermelon, and onion. Livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys etc. are also reared in the district. Poultry especially guinea fowl production is quite significant.

Politics:

The Municipal Assembly which is the highest administrative, political, and planning authority in the municipality is charged with the responsibility of formulating and implementing development plans, programmes and projects.⁴

Governance in the municipality is both modern and traditional. The former is represented by the Municipal Assembly created within the framework of the Local Government Act of 1993 (Act 462), while the latter is by the traditional authority in the area.⁵

Ethnic Distribution:

The predominant ethnic group in the municipality is the Mole Dagbani with other major ethnic groups being Kussasis, Mamprusis, Bissas and Moshies. However, there are quite several migrants from other parts of the country especially the south (most of whom are civil servants) and the neighbouring countries like Togo and Burkina Faso. Ethnic heterogeneity has had implications for harmony in the municipality. It is expected however, that inter-marriages among the diverse ethnic groupings will provide the impetus for peaceful co-existence.⁶

CRITICAL STAKEHOLDERS

Affected Persons:

- Residents of the District

Interested Actors:

- The Ghana Police Service,
- The Ghana Armed Forces,
- Ghana Health Service
- National and Regional Peace Councils
- Interior Ministry
- Civil Society Organizations
- Ministry of Health

INCIDENT PROFILING

Ten persons were reported dead in a renewed clash between residents and some alleged military personnel in Bawku. On January 31, 2023, two community civilian members allegedly died from military gunfire, and on the next day, a similar incident by the military resulted in the death of eight other persons. Seven of the deceased are reportedly from Sunga, a predominately Kussasi area, while the other three deceased were killed in the Bawku township which is a predominantly Mamprusi area.⁷

While efforts were being made by relevant stakeholders to address the conflict in the area, some further killings have been reported in the municipality.

A man was killed on the Sabon-gari road by unknown gunmen on February 6, 2023. On the same day, some criminal elements allegedly attempted to blow up a major bridge in Bawku with an improvised explosive bomb but were

⁴ Ghana Statistical Service, GIS

⁵ Ghana Statistical Service, GIS

⁶ Ghana Statistical Service, GIS

⁷ <https://www.adomonline.com/bawku-bodies-of-10-people-allegedly-killed-by-soldiers-released-to-families-for-burial/>

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unsuccessful. On February 7, 2023, around 5:15 pm, unknown armed men alleged to be Mamprusis alighted from a motor tricycle and started shooting at a group of men who were seated at a lorry park close to the municipal police station. The incident resulted in the death of two persons on the spot. Three commercial drivers (two Akans and one Bissa) who had loaded their vehicles and were to leave the Bawku township met their untimely death on the highway with several of their passengers sustaining various degrees of injuries. A number of Kusasis houses have allegedly been burnt down as well, during the night of February 8, 2023, at Kariama.⁸ It is alleged that the burning was carried out by the Azanga people. This led to further sporadic shootings resulting in the death of three more persons.⁹

Further shootings on Thursday, February 9, 2023, resulted in three more deaths. A child of about 12 years old was also reported killed on Friday, February 10, 2023. Reports from WANEP-Ghana field monitors alleges the military was responsible during an exchange of gunshots between civilians and military at about 12:40 p.m at Singnatin. It is alleged that the about 12-year-old child victim was part of a group that was reported to have blocked people who were coming to Bawku market. Further gunshots were heard in the municipality subsequently.¹⁰

RISK ANALYSIS

It is unclear whether the Ghana military was involved in the death of the persons in Bawku, or these were actions of impersonators. The incidents need to be independently investigated and the report shared with the bereaved families and other relevant stakeholders. Such an approach can inure to trust building and goodwill between the security deployments and the communities. This is more so because there have been allegations in the past about some armed civilians impersonating and paralleling the military operations in an attempt to provoke confrontations with rival disputants as well as to discredit the presence and operations of the security deployed in Bawku.

In the recent incident, it was alleged that some security fatigues were intercepted at a bus station addressed to be sent to Bawku. The suspect was however arrested but reported to be discharged allegedly.¹¹ This raises the security risks in Bawku especially if it emerges to be a case of repeated impersonation of the security personnel,

In addition to this, the ongoing conflict in Bawku can have further implications for peace and security. Any sustained violence, misunderstanding, mistrust and non-cooperation among the security, the factions and communities in Bawku and adjoining districts might provide opportunities for extremists and terrorist infiltration into Ghana starting from Bawku. This then could result in intense cross-border violence by the extremists between Burkina Faso and Ghana's northern borders. Catalyzing this could be the availability of small arms in the afflicted areas made possible by the sustained violence in the conflict which can exacerbate the violence and increase the risk of armed (also criminal) attacks, making it difficult to achieve stability and peace in Bawku and across the border with Burkina Faso. This is plausible because under such a circumstance, and with the influx of displaced persons from Burkina Faso, in-country and cross-border ethnic mobilizations for violence can occur. There can be further impacts including further displacements, pressure on social services and infrastructure, food and other economic consequences.

⁸ Reports from Field Monitors

⁹ Reports from Field Monitors

¹⁰ Reports from Field Monitors

¹¹ Ibid

RECOMMENDATIONS

- First, WANEP-Ghana appeals to the people of Bawku, especially people involved in the sporadic gun violence and acts synonymous with criminality, and their accomplices, to re-think the negative impacts of their actions on the ordinary people of Bawku and on themselves and cease the violence. Similarly, we call on the leadership of the Bawku conflict to further assess the varied generational effect of these recurrent gun violence and discourage their members, particularly the youth from being deceived by anyone to engage in violence.
- The Upper East Regional Security Council (UERSEC), the Bawku Municipal Security Council (MUSEC), and the National and Regional Peace Councils as well as the specific security deployments should intensify the collaboration among them and engage with all relevant traditional and religious representatives, ethnic leaders, youth, women groups and other critical stakeholders of the conflict in discussions to determine pathways towards de-escalating the tensions, and sustaining stability in Bawku. Those pathways should include sustained alternative dispute and reconciliatory processes.
- The REGSEC and MUSEC should increase the presence of security especially to unmanned border routes and communities to prevent any security infiltration, curtail the gunfires, and protect lives and properties.
- WANEP Ghana calls for a joint team comprising the National Peace Council (NPC), the National Chief Imam or his office and the National House of Chiefs to embark on some days' working visit to the factions to persuade the factions to mitigate the violence and explore lawful avenues that are still available to them to addressing their grievances. In this approach, WANEP believes that the Nayiri, the Overlord of the Mamprugu Traditional Area, has an important role to play in resolving the impasse and the Chief Imam should prevail on him to sustain his peaceful influence on the conflict. WANEP Ghana and other notable civil society peacebuilding organisations are available to provide the much needed technical and other forms of assistance in that regard.
- WANEP-Ghana strongly advises that any support to Bawku especially by shadow, and third parties, should be towards influencing peaceful processes and bringing life back to Bawku but not for political gains that intermittently make Bawku a ghost town.
- Lastly, WANEP-Ghana calls on the Kusasis to return to the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) because the BIEPC remains one concrete local cohesion-building structure for peace efforts in the area.