

RESEARCHED AND COMPILED BY THE REFUGEE DOCUMENTATION CENTRE OF IRELAND ON THE 11 JULY 2024

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COI QUERY RESPONSE

GHANA – INFORMATION ON FETISH PRIESTS AND RITUAL MURDER

Daily Guide Network in July 2024 states that: “A popular mallam at Kakpayili near Bamvim, a suburb of Tamale in the Northern Region, Afa Abdul Rahman Madaha, has been arrested by the police for allegedly engaging in ritual killing. The suspect is accused of killing two children who went missing some days ago in Tamale. According to residents, they suspected ritual killings because the bodies of the children were found in an abandoned car at the suspect's house, which compelled them to set the house ablaze. Assemblyman for Kakpayili Electoral Area, Hafiz Andani, who confirmed the incident to DAILY GUIDE, said the twin boys and their friend went to the suspect's house but only one of the twins went back home.”¹

Another document from the *Daily Guide Network* in July 2024 notes that: “Some residents of Achowa in the Ahanta West Municipality of the Western Region have burnt a man to death for allegedly going to the premises of a fetish priest in the area. The 60-year-old man, identified as Isaac Ansah, popularly called 'Uncle Joojo', was alleged to have consulted the fetish priest to kill some residents of the farming community. According to information gathered, the residents who got wind of the alleged move by Uncle Joojo, accosted him and purportedly set him ablaze on Thursday, June 27, 2024, at about 7pm. The community caretaker, Samuel Johndy, told journalists that after the fetish priest was consulted, he (fetish priest) went to the community's chief priestess (Oman Komfo) to inform her of what Uncle Joojo wanted him to do. The community priestess also went to inform the community leaders of Achowa of the alleged diabolic plan. Subsequently, a community meeting was organised where the fetish priest and the community priestess were invited and asked to name the person who had consulted the priest to kill some residents. According to Mr. Johndy, the fetish priest mentioned Uncle Joojo (the deceased) as the one who sent a list of names of some residents of the Achowa Community for him to kill. It was gathered that the community leaders then asked that Uncle Joojo be brought to the meeting. He was later brought to the meeting on motorbike from Dixcove. The deceased was alleged to have confirmed the story.”²

¹ Daily Guide Network (2 July 2024) Mallam Arrested For Suspected Ritual Killing

² Daily Guide Network (1 July 2024) *Man Killed For Consulting Fetish Priest*

This document further points out that: “However, later in an interview, some of the residents indicated that the deceased did not confirm that he consulted the fetish priest to kill anybody. ‘The deceased said he consulted the fetish priest to change the minds of people who had plans to banish him from the community so that he (the deceased) can continue to stay in the area,’ some of the residents also claimed. According to sources, the deceased was recently accused of killing a young footballer in the community, so the leaders had decided to banish him from the community. Mr. Johnndy said, ‘This was about two weeks ago. I even travelled and the following day after my return, I heard that Uncle Joojo has been burnt to death.’ Meanwhile, DAILY GUIDE has gathered that six people, including the caretaker and the assembly member of the area, have been arrested by the police to assist in their investigation, while the charred body of Uncle Joojo has been deposited at a morgue.”³

The *US Department of State Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* in April 2024 mentioned that: “Media reported several killings and attempted killings of women for ritual purposes. In the Northern, North East, Upper East, and Upper West Regions, families or traditional authorities banished rural women suspected of “witchcraft” to “witch camps.”⁴

In April 2024 *Daily Guide Network* reported that: “A self- styled fetish priest has been remanded into Prison custody by the Kwadaso Circuit Court in the Ashanti Region for allegedly publishing false information about the VIP Jeoun Transport Company. The accused, Emmanuel Frimpong, 24, also known as ‘Beyefuo,’ reportedly published the information via Tiktok alleging that the drivers of the VIP were engaged in ritual expeditions. At the court, his plea to a charge of publishing false information was not taken under the Electronic Communication Act, as the information he put out was misleading and tarnishing the image of the VIP Jeoun Transport Company. The Presiding Judge, Stephen Kumi, remanded him for two weeks to reappear on April 26 and also charged the police to do a thorough investigation into the matter. The Prosecutor, Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Emelia Owusu, briefing the court said the suspect had superimposed a VIP-branded coach on the TikTok to make the allegations. He said the suspect alleged that before a driver was entrusted with a coach or bus by the owner, the driver should agree to be buried in a casket to sell his soul to the owner. The prosecution said the suspect explained that while the soul of the driver was wandering in the atmosphere, it meant loyalty to the owner of the vehicle. The prosecution said the suspect further alleged that accidents involving the VIP buses were, as a result of the rituals.”⁵

Ghana News Agency (GNA) in February 2024 states that: “Simon Dorve, 41, a prime suspect in the murder of Christopher Alavi, a 31-year-old boy from Ziope, has allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself in police cells at Akatsi in the Volta Region. Dorve, a fetish priest and resident of Wlitye-Agamakope, until his demise, was in police custody together with two other suspects for allegedly masterminding the murder of Christopher Alavi, who had gone missing for several months. A police source confirmed that the “suicide” was carried out on Tuesday, February 27, and the body of the deceased had been moved to the Ho Teaching Hospital Morgue by a team from the Regional Police Command for further examination.”⁶

The *Ritual Killing In Africa* in January 2024 points out that: “A gruesome murder for ritualistic purposes took place in Ghana's Central Region on January 22. A 3-week-old baby was the innocent victim of superstition, greed and a criminal mind. The baby's father and two accomplices have been arrested in connection with the alleged ritual murder case, a swift action for which the Ghanaian police is to be

³ ibid

⁴ US Department of State (22 April 2024) 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Ghana, p.10

⁵ Daily Guide Network (15 April 2024) Fetish Priest Caged Over False Information

⁶ Ghana News Agency (GNA) (29 February 2024) Akatsi South: Fetish priest allegedly commits suicide in police cells

commended. One of the three accused persons is the 21-year-old father of the baby victim. How on earth is it possible that the belief in witchcraft or the power which ritualistic murder is supposed to create can make a person the murderer of his or her own child? How can you believe that sacrificing a newborn baby for 'money ritual' can create 'juju' ultimately resulting in (more) wealth, power or another desired goal for the perpetrator(s)? More research is needed to reveal the reasons behind ritualistic murders and related criminal acts. The belief in the power of ritualistic murders is widespread in Ghana, but not exclusively in this West African country, as the evidence presented on this site clearly demonstrates.”⁷

The *International Annals of Criminology* in June 2022 notes that: “Report number 15 concerned three teenage boys (two of them senior high school students) butchered by a juju-man. The facts of the case are that on 18 February 2013, the three boys consulted a fetish priest to prepare a charm called "for girls" (apparently meant for users to get girls' attention) and double money for them. The fetish priest collected GH¢1,800 (£240), which he promised to double for them. As part of the money-doubling ritual, the spiritualist took them to a remote area and gave them some fresh eggs and concoctions to ingest, causing them to become drowsy almost immediately. He then butchered all three with a machete and disappeared with their money, mobile phones and other items. Fortunately, one of the victims was found alive in the bush by a farmer who took him to a local hospital. Aided by information from the survivor, the police managed to apprehend the perpetrator, who still had some of the stolen items in his possession at the time of his arrest. The fetish priest was in March 2020 sentenced to death by a high court for the two murders (Ghana News Agency 2020a).”⁸

The same report points out that: “The rise in ritual paedicide cases in Ghana has also been blamed, to a significant extent, on the massive portrayal of juju and juju rituals as an efficient wealth guaranteeing religious practice in African movies (particularly those made in Nigeria and Ghana) and the huge exposure of Ghanaian youth to such movies.”⁹

The *Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ)* in April 2022 under the heading “Witchcraft Allegations and Violent Behaviours” states that: “This section also deals with why the respondents were accused of witchcraft, and the actions meted out against them. The respondents were asked to indicate the basis upon which others were accused of witchcraft. The data shows that 71 (42.8%) of respondents said they were seen in dreams attempting to kill their accusers, 29 (17.5%) said a relative/husband was seriously sick, 24 (14.5%) said anytime they gave birth the child died, 23 (13.9%) said a relative died, 12 (7.2%) said they were labeled by the fetish priest as witches, 4 (2.4%) said their rivals died, whilst 3 (1.8%) said they inherited their husbands' properties.”¹⁰

In July 2020 West Africa Democracy Radio (WADR) mentioned that: “The killing of a 90 year old woman, accused of being a Witch in Ghana's Savannah region has attracted widespread criticism and condemnation. Akua Denteh was brutally whipped and stoned by members of her community after a fetish priest accused her of witchcraft.”¹¹

This document further points out that: “The incident was partly videoed and has gone viral on social media. The inspector general of police has dispatched a team of homicide experts from the National

⁷ Ritual Killing In Africa (26 January 2024) Ghana, Central Region: man arrested for killing his 3-week-old baby for rituals

⁸ International Annals of Criminology (June 2022) The Superstition that Dismembers the African Child: An Exploration of the Scale and Features of Juju-Driven Paedicide in Ghana, p.16

⁹ Ibid, p.22

¹⁰ Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) (22 April 2022) Baseline Study Report on Access to Justice and Gender Based Violence against Elderly Women Alleged As Witches in Ghana

¹¹ Nonagenarian accused of witchcraft killed in Ghana (28 July 2020) Nonagenarian accused of witchcraft killed in Ghana

Police Headquarters to assist find the perpetrators who have allegedly fled the town while Amnesty International has taken up the matter.”¹²

The *SAGE Open* in July 2020 reported that: “The forced enslavement of young female virgins in Ghana is known as “trokosi.” This traditional ritual is predominantly practiced among members of the Ewe ethnic group who live mostly in the Volta Region; however, there is some evidence of the occurrence of trokosi in the Greater Accra region. Trokosi involves the commitment of virgins, generally female children, to fetish shrines for atonement of their relatives’ sins. These sins include murder, adultery, theft, lying, sexual intercourse with a trokosi, refusal of debt payment, defiance of the group, and rudeness to group members. The victims of trokosi are forced to committal and may endure marked identification with garments, the denial of clothes selection, forced labor, forced marriage and sex with a priest, and physical abuse for defiance.”¹³

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¹² *ibid*

¹³ *SAGE Open* (13 July 2020) *Women's Survival in Ghana: What Has Law Got to Do With It?*, p.15

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