



Transforming Ghana's prisons: A historical and biblical perspective

Samuel Boahen¹  & Isaac Boaheng² 

¹ Sunyani Senior High School, Ghana.

² University of the Free State, South Africa; Christian Service University, Kumasi, Ghana.

ABSTRACT

Human societies have long sought to regulate crime and moral deviance, resulting in the evolution of imprisonment as a mechanism of social control. Despite ongoing reforms, Ghana's prison system has not fully achieved its rehabilitative, deterrent, and reintegrative objectives. This study critically examines the historical evolution of prisons in selected ancient civilizations and evaluates Ghana's penal system through the theological-ethical lens of Matthew 25:31–46. Employing a qualitative historical and theological research approach based on documentary analysis, the study explores the relationship between historical penal practices, contemporary correctional challenges, and biblical principles of justice, compassion, and human dignity. The findings reveal that Ghana's correctional system continues to be constrained by punitive practices that undermine offender rehabilitation and successful reintegration into society. Drawing on the ethical teachings of Matthew 25, the study argues for a restorative justice framework that prioritises human dignity, reconciliation, rehabilitation, and social reintegration. The study contributes to scholarship by integrating historical penology with biblical ethics to propose contextually relevant reforms that can inform correctional policy and practice in Ghana.

Keywords: Criminology, Victimology, Penology, Recidivism, Misdemeanor.

INTRODUCTION

Inherently, man has a natural disposition to sin as a result of the original sin inherited from the very first parents of the human race (Adam and Eve). As such, crime has bedevilled human history right from creation. The story of Cain murdering Abel after their respective offering to God in Genesis 4:1-16 marks the first recorded crime in the Bible. Crime. This story finds corroboration in Islamic tradition, which observes that the first recorded act of crime occurred when Qabil (Cain), the son of Prophet Adam, murdered his brother Habil (Abel).¹

In developing countries such as Ghana, prisons, instead of reforming convicts, serve as an avenue for hardening those who come there. Giving credence to this, Martin Kpebu, as reported by Eric Nana Yaw Kwafo in a Joy FM interview on May 11, 2022, observed that the deplorable prison conditions in Ghana—including overcrowding, inadequate feeding, and lack of space—often harden inmates, leaving

¹ Mohammad Belayet, *Lectures on Criminology and Penology* (Chittagong, Bangladesh: Chittagong Independent University, 2019), 3.

many convicts more criminally inclined upon their release.² Rising crime rates have sparked national debate within Ghana's communal context on reforming the penal system to achieve both preventive and corrective goals, acknowledging the interdependence of social well-being. This study appropriates Jesus' teaching in the Gospel of Matthew 25 as a theological framework for Christian engagement with prison reform, particularly in relation to care for prisoners.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative, desk-based research design based on the analysis of secondary data. The study drew on a wide range of scholarly sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government policy documents, official reports, and statistical publications relating to the history of imprisonment, correctional systems, and prison administration in Ghana. Documentary analysis served as the primary method of data collection.

The study employed multiple analytical approaches to address its objectives. Conceptual analysis was used to define and clarify key criminological and correctional concepts relevant to the study. Historical analysis traced the evolution of imprisonment from selected ancient civilizations to the contemporary Ghanaian prison system, providing the historical context for understanding current correctional practices. In addition, descriptive-analytical methods were applied to examine incarceration patterns, recidivism trends, and the structural challenges confronting Ghana's prison system through the interpretation of existing literature and official statistical data.

To provide the study with a normative ethical perspective, a theological-exegetical analysis of Matthew 25:31–46 was undertaken. This biblical text was examined to identify principles of justice, compassion, human dignity, rehabilitation, and social reintegration, which served as the ethical framework for evaluating Ghana's correctional system. The integration of historical, conceptual, descriptive, and theological analyses enabled a comprehensive assessment of the Ghanaian prison system and informed contextually relevant recommendations for correctional reform grounded in restorative justice principles.

DISCUSSION

Etymology and Definition of Crime

The term *crime* originates from the Latin word *crimen*, meaning "charge" or "cry of distress," and in Old English usage, it connoted "sinfulness" or "wickedness."³ Crime is regarded as a phenomenon as ancient as society itself, evolving over time and place in accordance with the prevailing social norms and values of specific communities. Therefore, the definition, form, and concept of crime evolve in response to temporal shifts, political regimes, and the behavioral dynamics of society. The debate over defining crime typically revolves around the comparative merits and limitations of adopting a social rather than a legal definition. The sociological dimension, though largely unwritten and less visible than formal criminal law, encompasses many aspects that the legal framework tends to overlook. From the standpoint of criminology, which is the scientific study of crime, including its origins, impacts, and society's responses to criminal behavior,⁴ crime is a legally punishable offense resulting from an action or omission that breaches a law set by an authoritative body.⁵

Broadly defined, Hossain adds, crime refers to an unlawful act punishable under statutory or state law, constituting a form of antisocial behavior that transgresses public norms to such a degree that it is proscribed by legal statute and thus falls within the domain of criminological inquiry.⁶ Peter J Ferrara further notes that crime may be understood as any act that violates or threatens the rights of individuals, rather than merely as conduct prohibited by statute, which reflects the conventional

² Eric Nana Yaw. Kwafo, "Prison Conditions in Ghana Harden Criminals – Lawyer Kpebu." (Modern Ghana, 2025). <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1157211/prison-conditions-in-ghana-harden-criminals-lawy.html/> as assessed on August 23,2025.

³ Hossain, Lectures on Criminology and Penology, 3.

⁴ Kumar Ramesh, "Criminology and Penology with Victimology," *Pedagogy 1* (2025): 18.

⁵ <https://uolllb.com/blogs/uol/definition-of-crime/> as accessed on July 13,2025.

⁶ Hossain, Lectures on Criminology and Penology, 4.

positivist definition.⁷ Commenting on the characteristics of crime, Michael Kwadwo Ntiamoah and Elysium Orison Ameyibor intimate that crime is characterized by a deviation from established societal norms, subject to a range of sanctions including capital punishment, monetary fines, removal from office, or permanent disqualification from holding public positions.⁸ The definition of crime is generally reflected in actions deemed culpable and offensive to the deeply held and clearly defined values of collective consciousness, thus necessitating the imposition of punitive sanctions.⁹

Findings by J. Samaha indicate that generally, crime is not limited to any specific group; however, youths aged 15 to 24 are responsible for the highest proportion of violent offenses, with males committing crimes at six times the rate of females, even though recent years have seen the fastest increase in crime among women.¹⁰ Traditionally, crimes are classified into two main categories: felonies, which are the most serious offenses punishable by imprisonment of one year or more and include acts such as robbery, rape, aggravated assault, murder, arson, narcotics offenses, motor vehicle theft, burglary, and defilement, and misdemeanors, which are comparatively less severe and punishable by fines or imprisonment of up to one year.¹¹

Crime is generally understood to comprise two fundamental elements: *actus reus*, the physical act or conduct that constitutes a legal violation, and *mens rea*, the mental state or intent accompanying the act. The concept of crime has undergone significant evolution over the centuries, with its earliest interpretations grounded in religious doctrines, cultural traditions, and prevailing social norms. To reinforce their point, Ramesh and Biswas further submit that, in ancient societies, crime was commonly regarded as a transgression against divine law or the established social order, with punishments aimed at restoring cosmic harmony or placating offended deities.¹² Early conceptions of crime were relatively rudimentary, emphasizing retributive justice over rehabilitative or preventative measures, and were deeply shaped by the dominant moral, religious, and political ideologies of their respective eras.¹³

The Nature and Purpose of Punishment

Punishment has been recognized as a fundamental component of criminal justice in human societies since the earliest records of civilization. Newman defines punishment as the infliction of pain or another adverse consequence by legal authorities upon an individual who has violated a rule, as a response to the committed offense.¹⁴ The concept refers to the degree of sanctions imposed upon an individual once criminal liability is established, as well as the written and unwritten norms that regulate their application.¹⁵

Answers to the question of why individuals are punished when they commit a crime or offence can be found within the framework of theories of punishment. Criminal punishment seeks to balance the principle of reforming and rehabilitating offenders with society's legal obligation to protect the public.¹⁶ Historically, criminal punishments have been justified on five main theoretical grounds, namely, the theory of deterrence, incapacitation, rehabilitation, restitution, and retribution.

Deterrence theory, within criminology and criminal justice, posits that the prospect or application of punishment is a means of discouraging potential offenders from engaging in unlawful behavior.¹⁷

⁷ Peter Ferrara, "Retribution and Restitution: A Synthesis," *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 6, no. 2 (1982), 4.

⁸ Michael Kwadwo Ntiamoah and Elysium Orison Ameyibor, "Shrines and Social Order in Ghana: A Study of Duvoh Shrine in Peki, Volta Region, Ghana," *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2023): 133.

⁹ Chris Abotchie, *Social Control in Traditional Southern Ewealand of Ghana: Relevance for Modern Crime Prevention*, vol. 10 (Ghana Universities Press Accra, 1997), 10.

¹⁰ Joel Samaha, *Criminal Justice* (Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003), 36.

¹¹ James Tetteh Teye, "Prisoner Social Reintegration in Ghana through Christian Social Support and Restorative Justice" (University of Ghana, 2019).

¹² Ramesh, *Criminology and Penology with Victimology*, 3.

¹³ Ramesh, *Criminology and Penology with Victimology*, 3.

¹⁴ Graeme Newman, *The Punishment Response* (Routledge, 2017), 6-7.

¹⁵ Anzaku Sylvester Alex, Ismaila Garba Adigizi, and Agube Solomon Aguye, "The Theoretical Exploration of Punishment and Incarceration in Nigeria?," *Research Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (2016): 84.

¹⁶ Shailja Thakur, "The Concept of Punishment and Theories of Punishment," *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences* 12, no. 10 (2023): 18.

¹⁷ Patricia Yeboah, "Non-Custodial Sentencing and Reduction of Overcrowding in Ghana Prisons: Case Study of Nsawam Male Prisons," (2023).

The underlying premise of this concept is that individuals contemplating illegal activities engage in a rational decision-making process in which they weigh the potential benefits against the disadvantages, such that when the perceived costs—particularly legal repercussions—outweigh the advantages, the likelihood of criminal involvement is reduced.¹⁸ Deterrence, as a purpose of punishment, operates on two levels—individual and general—by instilling fear in the offender to prevent reoffending and simultaneously warning the broader public of the consequences of violating the law. The aim of general deterrence is not primarily to punish the individual offender but to make them an “example” that, by instilling fear of prosecution¹⁹—such as when a life sentence for murder is publicized—dissuades others from engaging in similar crimes.²⁰

The rehabilitation theory of punishment rose to prominence in the 20th century and continues to remain influential today. The rehabilitative theory of punishment centers on treatment, understood as a structured program of training and guidance designed to enable the offender, upon release from custody, to successfully reintegrate and adapt to a conventional way of life.²¹ Rehabilitation seeks to prevent future crime by reforming the behaviour of an offender through interventions such as education, vocational training, counseling, and treatment programs. This theory emphasizes not the communal benefits of punishment but rather the infliction of suffering on the offender proportionate to the gravity of their crimes, grounded in the belief that such retribution restores a moral balance by repaying the wrongs committed.

The Retributive Theory of Punishment, on the other hand, is often regarded by society as the “Theory of Vengeance” and represents the most rudimentary yet arguably the least considerate approach to imposing penal sanctions on offenders. Justice is understood as the retributive punishment of crime, grounded in the principle that offenders should face consequences proportional to their actions. The retributive theory, built on the bedrock of revenge, emphasizes punishment not for its communal benefit but for imposing suffering proportionate to the offense, thereby deterring personal vengeance and fostering societal satisfaction and trust in the justice system when offenders are seen as adequately punished.²² The essential elements of the retributive theory of punishment are threefold: (a) the mere commission of a crime constitutes sufficient grounds for punishment, (b) the pain inflicted must be proportionate to the offence committed, and (c) punishment is regarded as an end in itself rather than a means to an end.²³

Incapacitation, also called isolation or prevention, prevents future crime by removing offenders from society, reflecting the recognition that some individuals cannot be deterred or rehabilitated.²⁴ The preventive or incapacitation theory of punishment conceives incarceration as a means of isolating the offender through custodial confinement, thereby preventing further victimization of society. In other words, the rationale for incapacitation lies in the recognition that offenders, while restrained through measures such as incarceration, house arrest, or even capital punishment, are prevented from harming other members of society. The justification for preventive punishment rests solely on the premise that society is safeguarded as long as the offender is confined in isolation. Capital punishment represents the most extreme and irreversible form of incapacitation.²⁵ Other severe or permanent forms of incapacitative punishment include various practices of dismemberment.

Restitution, which functions similarly to a civil damages award, seeks to prevent future crime by imposing financial penalties on the defendant through court-ordered payments to the victim for losses such as physical injuries, property or monetary damage, and, though less commonly, emotional

¹⁸ Yeboah, “Non-Custodial Sentencing and Reduction of Overcrowding in Ghana Prisons: Case Study of Nsawam Male Prisons.”

¹⁹ Thakur, “The Concept of Punishment and Theories of Punishment,” 18.

²⁰ Thakur, “The Concept of Punishment and Theories of Punishment.”

²¹ Alex, Adigizi and Aguye, “The Theoretical Exploration of Punishment and Incarceration in Nigeria?”, 83.

²² Socialsci LibreTexts – The Purposes of Punishment.” *LibreTexts: Substantive Criminal Law*.

https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Under_Construction/Purgatory/JPP_207_Substantive_Criminal_Law/01%3A_Introduction_to_Criminal_Law/1.05%3A_The_Purposes_of_Punishment/ as accessed on August 26, 2025.

²³ Alex, Adigizi and Aguye, “The Theoretical Exploration of Punishment and Incarceration in Nigeria?”, 82.

²⁴ Thakur, “The Concept of Punishment and Theories of Punishment,” 19.

²⁵ Ahmad Siddique, *Criminology and Penology*, 6th ed. (Lucknow: Eastern Book Company, 2009), 128.

distress.²⁶ The primary function of the criminal justice system is to restore the victim through restitution rather than to focus on punishing the offender. Reparation should be structured to restore the victim or their heirs to the position they would have occupied had the criminal act not taken place.²⁷ The primary advantage of restitution lies in its capacity to alleviate the emotional, physical, or financial burdens of crime victims and their families, without negating the occurrence of the offense, while simultaneously avoiding the pitfalls of state-funded compensation schemes by requiring offenders themselves to bear the cost, thereby minimizing the risk of collusion between victims and criminals.

Global and Local Incarceration Statistics

From their 2024 research, Helen Fair and Roy Walmsley report that from the global perspective, as of early 2024, over 10.99 million individuals were incarcerated globally—either awaiting trial or serving sentences—though this figure excludes unavailable data from Eritrea, Somalia, and North Korea, and remains incomplete for China.²⁸ Of this number, 1,384,534, representing approximately twelve point six percentage (12.60 %), are prisoners in Africa. The situation of Ghana as published by World Brief Prison data reports that as of 30th June 2025, there were fourteen thousand and twenty-three (14023) prisoners across forty-six penal institutions comprising of one point one percentage (1.1%) being Juveniles/minors/ young prisoners, one point six percentage (1.6%) being female prisoners, seven point one percentage (7.1%) being foreign prisoners, and ninety point two percentage (90.2%) being Ghanaian male adults.²⁹ The figure implies that there are forty-one inmates for every one hundred thousand population of Ghanaians, based on an estimated population of thirty-four million three hundred and ninety thousand (34.39 million) people.³⁰ From the above figures, the official prison capacity of ten thousand two hundred and sixty-five (10,265) has been exceeded by three thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight inmates (3758), leading to overcrowding in most penal institutions.³¹ With updated data from the Ghana Prisons Service on Monday, July 14, 2025, there are 13,975 prisoners in Ghana, comprising 13,752 males (98.40%) and 223 females (1.6%).³²

Historical Roots, Definition, and Types of Prisons

The English word prison finds its root in the old French word “prisoun”, which is a mix of Celtic and Greco-Roman languages, carrying the idea of captivity or imprisonment.³³ Although the precise origins of the prison institution remain difficult to determine, historical records indicate that rudimentary forms of incarceration existed in antiquity and throughout the medieval period, often taking the form of dungeons where individuals condemned to death were detained pending execution.³⁴ However, Evie and Dugger conjecture that the concept and use of prisons can be traced to around 1000 BCE in the ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt.³⁵ These ancient prisons were built as detention centres constructed as underground dungeons, and offenders were kept there awaiting their sentence to death or slavery.³⁶ This means that, from their very inception, prisons were never places of ultimate punishment but rather temporary places for offenders awaiting a verdict.

Since the dawn of recorded civilization, societies have employed a variety of methods—broadly categorized into seven distinct strategies—to address violations of social order, and they include execution, physical injury, deprivation of liberty, disgrace, forced labour, financial penalties and

²⁶ Socialsci LibreTexts – The Purposes of Punishment.” *LibreTexts: Substantive Criminal Law*.

²⁷ Ferrara, “Retribution and Restitution: A Synthesis.”

²⁸ Helen Fair and Roy Walmsley, “World Prison Population List” (ICPR, 2024), 2.

²⁹ Ghana Prisons Service – Statistics.” *Ghana Prisons Service*. <https://www.prisonstudies.org/country/ghana/> as accessed on July 15, 2025.

³⁰ Ghana Prisons Service – Statistics.” *Ghana Prisons Service*.

³¹ “Ghana Prisons Service – Statistics.” *Ghana Prisons Service*.

³² Ghana Prisons Service – Statistics.” *Ghana Prisons Service*

³³ Ashley Dugger and Lilly Evie, “Prisons: History, Characteristics & Purpose,” Study.com., 2025, <https://study.com/learn/lesson/prisons-history-characteristics-purpose.html>.

³⁴ Alex Antwi, “Social Reintegration of Offenders and Recidivism in Ghana ” (University of Ghana, 2015), 97.

³⁵ Dugger and Evie, “Prisons: History, Characteristics & Purpose.”

³⁶ Dugger and Evie, “Prisons: History, Characteristics & Purpose.”

banishment.³⁷ Woodruff also intimates that imprisonment, which embodies multiple strategies of social control, has long served as a principal mechanism for maintaining societal order through institutions—variously termed penitentiaries, correctional facilities, jails, or treatment centers.³⁸ Prisons serve to secure offenders, enforce sentences, and provide opportunities for rehabilitation through structured programmes.

A prison is an institution designated for the confinement of individuals either as a punitive measure or while awaiting trial, and is variously referred to as a jail, gaol, penitentiary, correctional center, correctional facility, or reformatory.³⁹ A distinctive feature of the prison system is its closed nature, as members of the wider society—apart from inmates' relatives and authorized visitors—have no direct involvement in its operations, ownership, or exchanges, thereby shielding it from external scrutiny.

Based on the security measures put in place, the duration of the sentence, the gravity of the offense, and the characteristics of the offender, prisons are classified into three, namely maximum security prisons, medium security prisons, and minimum security prisons.⁴⁰ Ghana has a network of minimum, medium, and maximum security prisons, with Ankaful serving as the country's sole internationally classified maximum security facility.

The Development of the Prison System in Ghana

Pre-Colonial Traditional Means of Maintaining Law and Order in Society

Traditional institutions in the pre-colonial era were instrumental in safeguarding the cultures and customs of the people, a function that was integral to the socioeconomic and political organization of society, particularly within the criminal justice system. In a communal Ghanaian society, the crime of an individual was considered to have a detrimental effect on the community as a whole and not only the individual in question. This view is shared by Ntiamoah and Ameyibor as they quote Victoria Ago, who notes that a crime must be duly atoned for and appropriate punitive measures enacted, as failure to do so results in communal suffering.⁴¹

In pre-colonial Ghana, the Chief/king served as the political leader in traditional Ghanaian societies, with the administration of punishments entrusted to family heads and chiefs, with the latter overseeing the enforcement of customary law imbued with physical, spiritual, religious, and cultural dimensions.⁴² Taboos (forbidden things) play a central role in most Ghanaian societies, serving as mechanisms to maintain social order.

Emergence of Prisons in Ghana

Scholars are divided over the assertion that traditional African society had penitentiary institutions as punishment or not before the coming of the Europeans. Steven Pierce, Florence Bernault, and Janet Roitman are among the many scholars who see penitentiary institutions as alien to Africa, as they intimate that the use of incarceration as punitive confinement was not indigenous to African societies but rather introduced and enforced through European colonial influence.⁴³ The above stance finds support in Aba-Afari's observation that before the establishment of British imperial rule, Ghanaian societies were governed by indigenous legal systems designed to preserve social equilibrium, communal solidarity, and harmonious interpersonal relations.⁴⁴ The objectives of the traditional legal system were not centered on deterrence or offender rehabilitation; rather, justice focused on restitution through

³⁷ Woodruff, *Understanding Roots: A Brief History of Prisons* (Lexipo), Accessed July 16, 2026, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kfglpxSNaEDReSzNTR_aEsQ1wkABsqYY1EmDOsSloM/edit?tab=t.0.

³⁸ Woodruff, *Understanding Roots: A Brief History of Prisons*.

³⁹ Frederick Bellson, "Assessing Human Rights Compliance in Ghana's Prisons: A Case Study of Awutu Camp Prison," (University of Education, 2020).

⁴⁰ Bellson, "Assessing Human Rights Compliance in Ghana's Prisons: A Case Study of Awutu Camp Prison, 20"

⁴¹ Ntiamoah and Ameyibor, "Shrines and Social Order in Ghana: A Study of Duvéh Shrine in Peki, Volta Region, Ghana, 133."

⁴² Reuben Luka Shekarau, Ahumuza JohnMary Vianney, and B Tucker, "The Evolution of the Prison System in Ghana, 1841-2007," *The Journal of Zaria Historical Research (ZAHIR)* 6, no. 1 (2022), 3.

⁴³ Florence Bernault and Janet Roitman, "A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa," 2003, 2.

⁴⁴ Sarah Aba-Afari, *Investigation into Guidance and Counselling Programmes in the Ghanaian Prisons: A Case Study of Kumasi Central Prison* (Masters' Thesis: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2011), 18.

compensation for victims and atonement through prescribed animal sacrifices, thereby promoting equity, communal harmony, and social cohesion. Antwi further writes that such scholars regarded the incarceration system as a colonial legacy deliberately structured to isolate and punish political dissenters, assert racial dominance, and enforce systems of capital and corporal punishment.⁴⁵

In its early development, Ghana's prison system served primarily as a custodial mechanism for the detention of prisoners.⁴⁶ Since its establishment in Ghana, the prison system has undergone significant transformation, evolving from a rudimentary institution focused primarily on punishment and detention to a central mechanism for the reformation and rehabilitation of offenders.⁴⁷ In a 2011 publication, the Ghana Prisons Service reports that they had forty-five establishments across the country's ten (now sixteen) administrative regions, including the Prisons Headquarters, Prison Officers' Training School, Senior Correctional Centre (formerly the Ghana Borstal Institute), seven female prisons, seven central prisons, fifteen local prisons, two open camp prisons, ten agricultural settlement camp prisons, and one medium security prison.⁴⁸

A significant shift occurred from mere punitive measures to an emphasis on the rehabilitation and humane treatment of prisoners, a principle enshrined in Section 165 of the Ghana Prisons Service Regulations of 1958, which mandates that while order and discipline must be rigorously maintained, inmates are to be treated with compassion and dignity.⁴⁹ The growing imperative to reform the prison system led the Asafo-Adjei Commission in 1967 to recommend the integration of both formal and informal education, resulting in the establishment of schools and libraries within Ghana's central prisons, the introduction of technical and vocational training, and demonstrable success that same year when nine of eleven inmates excelled in the national examinations.⁵⁰

The Ghana prison system serves to remove convicted individuals from the jurisdiction of the courts, safeguard their well-being through the provision of medical care, clothing, bedding, food, recreation, and library resources, while also ensuring their reformation and rehabilitation by offering opportunities for vocational training and moral instruction.⁵¹

Challenges Facing the Prison Institution Despite Skill Training in Ghana

Multiple studies demonstrate that prison facilities worldwide are predominantly characterized by challenges such as inadequate ventilation, abusive accommodation arrangements, increasing populations and overcrowding, inmate abuse, poor sanitation, the spread of diseases and deaths, hunger and malnutrition, food shortages, and insufficient medical care.⁵²

Since Ghana's independence from Britain in 1957, the prison system has undergone a series of reforms, though it continues to grapple with numerous challenges. Giving credence to the above, Patricia Yeboah cites Afari et. al. as she posits that the Ghana Prisons Service aims to reform the existing criminal system into one that is effective, humane, and secure.⁵³ Although the Ghana Prisons Service Decree in 1972 mandates the service to ensure both the secure custody and the welfare of prisoners, the challenge of overcrowding and Intermingling among Prison Inmates continues to persist.⁵⁴ Overcrowding in Ghanaian prisons has become a critical concern, primarily driven by high incarceration rates and persistent recidivism.⁵⁵ Digging deeper, Abundant Robert K. Awolugutu intimates that the challenges of prison overcrowding include heightened health risks, increased violence and conflict,

⁴⁵ Antwi, *Social reintegration of Offenders and Recidivism in Ghana*,3.

⁴⁶ Yeboah, *Non-Custodial Sentencing and Reduction of Overcrowding in Ghana Prisons*,11.

⁴⁷ Shekarau and Vianney, "The Evolution of the Prison System in Ghana, 1841- 2007,"2.

⁴⁸ Ghana Prisons Service, *HIV/TB Workplace Policy and Implementation Strategy* (Accra: Ghana Prisons Service, 2011), 8.

⁴⁹ Shekarau and Vianney, "The Evolution of the Prison System in Ghana, 1841-2007," 9.

⁵⁰ Shekarau and Vianney, "The Evolution of the Prison System in Ghana, 1841-2007," 9.

⁵¹Yeboah, *Non-Custodial Sentencing and Reduction of Overcrowding in Ghana Prisons*,13.

⁵² Augustina Ama Boadu, " Implementation Challenges of Welfare Provisions for Prisoners in Nsawam Medium Security Prisons " (University of Ghana, 2014), 22.

⁵³ Yeboah, *Non-Custodial Sentencing and Reduction of Overcrowding in Ghana Prisons*,3.

⁵⁴ Baffour Frank Darkwa, " Factors Contributing to Recidivism Among Inmates in the Nsawam Medium Security Prison " (University of Ghana, 2016), 16.

⁵⁵ Darkwa, *Factors Contributing to Recidivism Among Inmates in the Nsawam Medium Security Prison*,17.

restricted access to education and rehabilitation, psychological trauma and stress, strained resources, and adverse effects on prisoner reintegration.⁵⁶

Awolugutu further attributes overcrowding to limited prison infrastructure and resources, noting the absence of separate facilities for remand prisoners and explaining that institutions already struggling with inadequate capacity are nonetheless compelled to admit all individuals presented with valid warrants of detention.⁵⁷ Prohibitive bail terms and sentencing policies exacerbate overcrowding further, as excessively high bail conditions undermine the principle of presumption of innocence by denying indigent defendants the opportunity for temporary freedom pending the final determination of their cases. Closely related to the challenge of overcrowding are health challenges. As a result of the overcrowding, communicable diseases such as tuberculosis (TB), Hepatitis B & C, Respiratory infections, scabies, and skin infections usually spread among Ghanaian inmates. The problem of poor health could also be partly related to poor feeding, leaving the inmates with a relatively weaker immune system.

Another challenge found in Ghana prisons is inmate abuse. Prisoners in Ghana face significant safety concerns, as credible reports indicate that prison officers employ corporal punishment, verbal abuse, and short-term solitary confinement as disciplinary measures for inmate misconduct.⁵⁸ In Ghanaian prisons, prisoners are sometimes caned, beaten, struck with fists or belts, and verbally abused as punishments for infractions such as fighting, smoking, illegal trading, or theft, further noting cases where guards locked inmates in solitary confinement for three days, verbally assaulted them, and accepted bribes in exchange for favors or protection from mistreatment.⁵⁹

In addition, poor feeding is another challenge in Ghana prisons. Owing to the inadequacy and poor quality of prison meals, many inmates in Ghana depend on their families or external organizations for supplementary food. At a press conference at the Presidency in Accra on July 15, 2025, the Minister of Interior and National Security, Alhaji Mohammed Mubarak Muntaka, disclosed that the daily feeding grant per prison inmate was GH¢1.80, a figure he acknowledged as grossly inadequate.⁶⁰ With this amount as the budget for a three-times meal for the Ghanaian inmate, one could guess the quality and quantity of food served to the inmates.

Below are two selected overcrowding scenes in some Ghanaian Prisons.



*Figure 1: Caged neglected plight of the Ghanaian Prisoner*⁶¹

⁵⁶ Abundant Robert K. Awolugutu, "Decongesting Ghana's Prisons: Addressing The Alarming Issue of Overcrowding," GhanaWeb, 2025. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/Decongesting-Ghana-s-Prisons-Addressing-The-Alarming-Issue-Of-Overcrowding-1955952/> as accessed on August 27, 2025

⁵⁷ Awolugutu, "Decongesting Ghana's Prisons: Addressing The Alarming Issue of Overcrowding."

⁵⁸ Boadu, *Implementation Challenges of Welfare Provisions for Prisoners in Nsawam Medium Security Prisons*, 28.

⁵⁹ Boadu, *Implementation Challenges of Welfare Provisions for Prisoners in Nsawam Medium Security Prisons*, 28.

⁶⁰ Iddi Yire, "GH¢180 Feeding Grant per Prison Inmate Is Woefully Inadequate – Muntaka," MSN News, 2025, <https://www.msn.com/en-xl/africa/ghana/gh-180-feeding-grant-per-prison-inmate-is-woefully-inadequate-muntaka/ar-AA1IEFAe/> accessed on August 27, 2025.

⁶¹ Adom Online, Caged neglectec plight of the Ghanaian Prisoner, <https://www.adomonline.com/caged-neglected-plight-of-the-ghanaian-prisoner/> as accessed on August 20, 2026.



Figure 2: Inside a Ghanaian prison where inmates are crammed together.⁶²

Despite the challenges discussed above, the Ghana Prison Service is working around the clock to improve the lives of inmates through education programs aimed at equipping them with skills for their successful reintegration into society upon their release. For instance, ICT centres have been established in sixteen prison facilities across Ghana—including Koforidua Local, Kumasi Central, Nsawam Medium Security, Tamale Central, Ankaful Maximum Security, Nsawam Female, Sunyani Central, Navrongo Local, Wa Central, Yendi Local, Ho Central, and Sekondi Central prisons—to provide avenues for skill acquisition by both inmates and officers. In addition to ICT, carpentry and woodwork, tailoring and dressmaking, auto mechanics, kente and smock weaving, baking and confectionery, bead making and jewellery crafting, yoghurt and juice processing are examples of the skills that inmates receive.

Global and Local Recidivism Situation

Etymologically speaking, the word recidivism is derived from its Latin roots *re* (“back”) and *caedere* (“to fall”), signifying the tendency of previously incarcerated individuals to relapse into criminal behavior.⁶³ The problem of recidivism constitutes a pervasive global concern, manifesting in varying degrees across different continents and national contexts. Studies on criminal recidivism rates are crucial in the sense that they are frequently employed as a principal metric for evaluating the effectiveness of criminal justice systems. Validating the above point, Cecelia M. Klingele posits that recidivism rates serve as a principal metric by which legislators, policymakers, grant agencies, media, and criminal justice stakeholders assess the effectiveness or failure of specific criminal justice interventions.⁶⁴ In contribution, Denis Yukhnenko, Leen Farouki, and Seena Faze echo Robinson et al.’s assertion that data on Criminal recidivism rates serve as a critical basis for determining the implementation and expansion of offender management programmes.⁶⁵ They further observe that recidivism rates are used primarily to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of national and state justice systems, as well as rehabilitation programmes.

With a divergent view, Signe N. Andersen and Torbjørn Skardhamar argue that reported recidivism rates are shaped by a range of variables—such as data sources, definitional frameworks, and follow-up durations—many of which are not inherently reflective of the actual effectiveness of

⁶² English Elpais, Inside a Ghanaian prison where inmates are crammed together, https://english.elpais.com/international/2025-11-18/inside-a-ghanaian-prison-where-inmates-are-crammed-together-and-close-contact-spreads-skin-diseases-everything-hurts-you-cant-move-all-night.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com/ as accessed on August 20, 2025.

⁶³ Christine Glover et al., “Risk Factors of Recidivism: Lessons from Central Prison in Kumasi, Ghana,” 2018, 1.

⁶⁴ Cecelia Klingele, “Measuring Change: From Rates of Recidivism to Markers of Desistance,” *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 109 no. 4 (2019): 769–817.

⁶⁵ Denis Yukhnenko, Leen Farouki, and Seena Fazel, “Criminal Recidivism Rates Globally: A 6-Year Systematic Review Update,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 88 (2023): 1.

rehabilitation and reintegration processes for sentenced individuals.⁶⁶ In agreement, Klingele affirms that an overreliance on recidivism rates as the primary metric for assessing success may lead policymakers and criminal justice actors to overlook meaningful personal transformation among individuals and to undervalue interventions that facilitate positive progress in their rehabilitation and reintegration.⁶⁷ Gleaning from the above, although recidivism rates are globally recognized as a key metric for evaluating the effectiveness of criminal justice systems and offender management programs, excessive reliance on them—without considering their methodological limitations and the complex nature of individual rehabilitation—may result in a partial and potentially distorted understanding of policy success and reintegration outcomes.

From a global scholarly perspective, numerous factors have been identified as contributing to recidivism, including the experience and conditions of incarceration, insufficient rehabilitative programming, limited access to education and employment opportunities, lack of support from receiving communities upon release, mental health challenges and substance abuse, as well as gender-related dynamics.⁶⁸ The recidivism rate in the United States of America, according to research data from prisons in 30 states between 2005 and 2010, conducted by the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics (USBJS), is relatively alarming, with approximately seventy-five percentage (75%) of inmates released getting rearrested within five years after their release.⁶⁹

Recent studies across the African continent highlight recidivism as a persistent and serious challenge, with alarming rates reported in countries such as South Africa, where estimates range from 47% to as high as 95%, reflecting significant concerns about the effectiveness of correctional and reintegration efforts. They further reflect that, in sub-Saharan Africa, the challenges of recidivism and reintegration are exacerbated by socioeconomic constraints, including poverty, unemployment, and limited access to education and social services.⁷⁰ Taking a look at the Ghanaian context, Mensah and Akuoko highlight Belfour's assertion as they observe that facilitating the successful reintegration of offenders into Ghanaian society remains a considerable challenge.⁷¹ The recidivism rate for Ghana remains troubling at twenty-four percentage (24%), reflecting a persistent pattern of reoffending among formerly incarcerated individuals.⁷² The above percentage means nearly one of every four convicts released in Ghana is likely to be imprisoned again after a considerable period of time. The alarming situation can to a large extent be attributed to structural deficiencies—such as overcrowding and limited access to effective rehabilitation programmes, which create a challenging environment that impedes the successful reintegration of ex-offenders into society.

Biblical Position on the Welfare of Prisoners

The Greek term *desmōtērion*, commonly used to denote a prison structure, appears only sparingly in the New Testament, occurring in Matthew 11:2, Acts 5:21, 23, and Acts 16:26. The concept of imprisonment is a recurring motif throughout the Christian Bible, with the first record of it found in Genesis 39:20-23, where Joseph is imprisoned for allegedly trying to rape Potiphar's wife. Other notable bible characters that ended up in prison include Samson, Micaiah, Jeremiah, Jehoiachin, King Manasseh, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul and Silas, and other apostles. In the Roman world, prolonged incarceration signified a liminal legal status, as individuals of higher social standing were generally subjected to brief detention—often while awaiting trial or sentencing—and experienced relatively lenient conditions, such

⁶⁶ Synøve Nygaard Andersen and Torbjørn Skardhamar, "Pick a Number: Mapping Recidivism Measures and Their Consequences," *Crime & Delinquency* 63, no. 5 (2017): 613–35.

⁶⁷ Klingele, "Measuring Change: From Rates of Recidivism to Markers of Desistance," 774.

⁶⁸ Darkwa, *Factors contributing to recidivism among inmates in selected Ghana*, 31.

⁶⁹ Ronald Osei Mensah and Sarah Gyamfua Akuoko, "Triggers to Repeated Criminal Behaviour in Ghana: An Analysis of the Nsawam Prison through a Case Study Approach," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 10, no. 2 (December 19, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2268394>.

⁷⁰ Christina Boateng, William Boateng, and Ronald Osei Mensah, "Reducing Recidivism through Vocational Skills Training in Selected Ghanaian Prisons," *African Quarterly Social Science Review* 2, no. 1 (2025): 70–81.

⁷¹ Mensah and Akuoko, "Triggers to Repeated Criminal Behaviour in Ghana: An Analysis of the Nsawam Prison through a Case Study Approach." 3.

⁷² Mensah and Akuoko, "Triggers to Repeated Criminal Behaviour in Ghana: An Analysis of the Nsawam Prison through a Case Study Approach." 3.

as house arrest or military custody.⁷³ Incarceration in the Greco-Roman world was often associated with shame, not merely due to presumed guilt or the dishonor of indebtedness, but because detention compromised the cultural ideals of personal agency and self-mastery that were esteemed as virtues. In Roman society, prevailing values of honor and masculinity emphasized a man's ability to exert control over his circumstances and others; thus, incarceration, inherently involving a loss of such control, was closely associated with enslavement and subjugation, often eliciting contempt among Roman freemen.⁷⁴

In Matthew 25:31–46, Jesus issues a compelling appeal for the care of society's vulnerable—the hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, and imprisoned—emphasizing that such acts of compassion, although not exhaustive, constitute tangible expressions of faith in God and are essential for participation in the kingdom of God. Echoing the above point, T. Browns' thought is highlighted by Alfred R. Brunsdon¹ and Christopher Magezi, who state that the six moral characteristics identified in the passage are representative of Christian ethics rather than an exhaustive or definitive account of Christ's demands on his followers.⁷⁵ The challenge of this prerequisite for righteousness lies in Jesus' apparent regard for it as integral to the very essence of Christian life. In this passage, acts of mercy toward the marginalized—including the hungry, the sick, and the incarcerated—become the standard of judgment in the eschatological vision of Christ. In this eschatological text, Jesus associates himself with the marginalized, transforming prison visitation and care from a mere social obligation into a sacred encounter with Christ himself. Acts of mercy toward the needy, including prisoners, divide humanity into two groups: those who cared for the incarcerated receive eternal life, while those who neglected them incur divine judgment. In biblical times, most recurring issues that caused the imprisonment of people included, but were not limited to, religious nonconformity, political threats or false accusations, civil disobedience rooted in faith, the act of preaching the gospel or prophetic truth and every other act that contravened societal norms.

In contemporary Ghana, individuals are not imprisoned for their religious beliefs unless their actions, informed by faith, conflict with the laws of the state. This is inherently exemplified by Bishop Samuel Ben Owusu's appeal to President Nana Akufo-Addo to grant amnesty to pastors who contravened COVID-19 protocols during the pandemic.⁷⁶ However, the pervasive corruption within the judicial system—exposed by investigative journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas in his 2015 exposé, which revealed judges and magistrates accepting bribes in the form of money, livestock, and foodstuffs to subvert justice—suggests the possibility that some individuals may have been incarcerated not for crimes actually committed, but rather because their opponents influenced judicial outcomes through bribery. Jesus' call for believers to prioritize the welfare of prisoners inherently extends to all, including those who were justifiably imprisoned for the crimes they committed, against the backdrop that he urged his followers to love even their enemies (Matt. 5:44), of which prisoners exemplify all those viewed as enemies of society. In this context, prison visitation encompasses in-person visits or phone calls for encouragement and prayer, the provision of essential items such as money, food, toiletries, and other necessities, as well as the sharing of God's word to offer inmates the opportunity to accept Christ, reflecting James' teaching that faith without works is dead (James 2:26).

Beyond the literal prison, the text may also be understood to refer to those in a "prison of need" for their faith, as many who refuse to compromise their beliefs suffer losses such as employment, relationships, social standing, and family ties, thereby experiencing imprisonment in forms like poverty, loneliness, and identity or reputation crises. This moral framework challenges Ghana's prison system to move beyond punitive models toward restorative justice, emphasizing dignity, rehabilitation, and spiritual care.

⁷³ Matthew L. Skinner, "Remember My Chains: New Testament Perspectives on Incarceration," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 72, no. 3 (July 12, 2018): 273, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964318766296>.

⁷⁴ Skinner, "Remember My Chains," 275.

⁷⁵ Alfred R. Brunsdon and Christopher Magezi, "Fostering Embrace, Inclusion and Integration of Migrants in Complex Migration Situations: A Perspective from Matthew 25: 31–46 and Hebrews 13: 1–2," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no. 2 (2020): 10.

⁷⁶ 3News.com, "Pardon Jailed Pastors Who Violated Coronavirus Protocols – Akufo-Addo Told," Ghana Web, November 30, 2020, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Pardon-jailed-pastors-who-violated-coronavirus-protocols-Akufo-Addo-told-1121612/>.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With challenges such as overcrowding, inmate abuse, poor feeding, and health problems, several measures could help alleviate these conditions. They are highlighted below.

Given the vast arable land and forest resources of the country, agriculture offers strong potential for economic growth and poverty reduction. The government could acquire large tracts of farmland in the sixteen regions and expand the prison system by establishing correctional facilities on or near these lands. The selected inmates could then engage in agricultural labour. Providing balanced meals at least three times a day would help maintain health and productivity. Such an approach could reduce overcrowding in existing prisons, limit the spread of communicable diseases, and address malnutrition-related health issues, thereby lowering state healthcare costs. Additionally, agricultural produce could be exported to generate foreign exchange and support the national economy. Similar models exist in some countries where skilled inmates participate in infrastructure projects abroad under bilateral agreements, with earnings returned to their home governments while their welfare is ensured.

Secondly, the government should reconsider the integration of structured community service programs for inmates housed in medium- and minimum-security prisons. These programs may include public sanitation tasks such as sweeping streets, desilting gutters, planting trees, and other forms of environmental maintenance, as well as the engagement of skilled inmates in construction, masonry, carpentry, painting, plumbing, and related trades. A portion of the revenue generated from these services could be allocated to improving the nutritional welfare of the inmates, while the remainder could be retained in the state treasury. The opportunity to work without personal financial gain may, in itself, serve as a rehabilitative measure, fostering reflection and personal transformation. Furthermore, the public nature of such labor, often accompanied by the gaze of bystanders, may invoke a sense of humility and social accountability, potentially motivating inmates toward reformation. In a similar vein, public officials convicted of financial misappropriation—provided their offenses do not necessitate incarceration in maximum-security facilities—could be required to remain in public service with significantly reduced salaries until the embezzled funds are fully recovered. This form of penal restitution, combining continued professional engagement with diminished financial reward, may encourage introspection and promote the rehabilitative objectives of the correctional system.

In a similar vein, religious institutions, civil society organizations, non-governmental bodies, and financially capable individuals are urged to take immediate and concerted action to either expand, renovate, or reconstruct correctional facilities that are currently in deplorable conditions, to safeguard the lives of thousands subjected to such inhumane environments. As previously discussed, Christians—who constitute approximately 71.3% of the national population—are particularly enjoined to extend their engagement with the prison system beyond seasonal gestures during festive periods. In light of the moral imperative outlined in Matthew 25:31–46, where Jesus emphasizes the importance of attending to the welfare of the imprisoned, Christian communities are called to sustain year-round ministry within correctional settings. This involvement should encompass both spiritual support—such as intercessory prayer and counseling—and material assistance including food supplies, clothing, footwear, and other essentials. Furthermore, given the Church's commitment to advocating for the marginalized and voiceless, it can play a pivotal role in mobilizing pro bono legal support to ensure that inmates, especially those without legal representation, receive fair treatment. In addition, churches may consider establishing dedicated funds to pay fines and court-imposed fees on behalf of indigent inmates whose inability to meet such financial obligations has led to their incarceration. This initiative has the potential to contribute meaningfully to reducing prison overcrowding and promoting restorative justice.

Furthermore, the fact that prison congestion is partly due to prohibitive bail terms and sentencing policies, excessively high bail conditions and the prolonged nature of verdict giving could be reviewed in an attempt to decongest the prisons. The adjournment of cases on trivial grounds, which in turn delays the date for passing judgement could be minimized to the barest minimum since years spent as a detainee are not normally deducted from the sentence in case the alleged culprit is found guilty. The absence of counsel or parties should not always warrant adjournment in the technological era we find ourselves. If using tools such as Zoom and other such tools can be used on the part of parties or counsel who could

not make it in person to the court on the said date, and that would not infringe upon any law, then such technology should be deployed going forward.

Similarly, public figures must refrain from interfering in judicial proceedings, as such interference has historically undermined the integrity of the judiciary and eroded public confidence, often resulting in extrajudicial actions such as lynching and mob justice, leading to mass incarceration. Restoring public trust requires the judiciary to act with fairness and firmness, resisting external pressures from politicians, religious leaders, and traditional authorities so that alleged offenders may be held accountable under the law. By doing so, the prison system can more effectively fulfill its deterrent function, discouraging both offenders and the wider public from engaging in crime, which in turn would likely reduce crime rates, decrease prison admissions, and mitigate the challenges of overcrowding and its attendant consequences.

More so, the Church can serve as a Provider of Legal, Spiritual, and Material Support for Inmates. The church, working ecumenically and through local councils, can mobilize Christian professionals in the judicial system to form consultative bodies that provide legal guidance to believers who face challenges in accessing justice, thereby preventing imprisonment due to lack of legal aid. Beyond this, churches should strengthen their prison ministries by appointing preachers and counselors to provide inmates with spiritual encouragement, moral guidance, and a renewed sense of dignity. Such ministries must also extend to material assistance—financial donations, food, and essential supplies—so that the living conditions of the inmates are improved, and they are better prepared for reintegration into society, much like Paul’s intervention in the Philemon–Onesimus narrative.

Finally, the Church is an Advocate for reintegration and prison reform. The church also carries a crucial responsibility to prepare its members and wider society to welcome and reintegrate ex-prisoners, actively combating stigma and promoting access to employment opportunities that reduce idleness and the risk of reoffending. At the same time, the church must embrace its prophetic role in advocating systemic change by drawing public attention to inhumane prison conditions—such as overcrowding, poor nutrition, abuse, and corruption in the judiciary—and by pressing the government to commit resources for meaningful prison reform, including new correctional facilities and the dismissal of officials who pervert justice.

CONCLUSION

The history and purpose of prisons reveal a shift from ancient detention and retributive punishment to modern goals of rehabilitation and reintegration. Crime, rooted in evolving social, moral, and legal norms, remains a persistent challenge globally, with incarceration serving as one of society’s main responses. Ghana’s prison system reflects this evolution, merging colonial legacies with post-independence reforms aimed at humane custody and skill development. However, systemic challenges—particularly overcrowding, poor sanitation, inadequate healthcare, malnutrition, and abuse—continue to undermine these objectives, fostering recidivism and weakening reintegration. While vocational and educational programs provide hope, meaningful reform requires coordinated efforts across government, civil society, and faith institutions to ensure that punishment achieves justice, restoration, and societal protection.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 3News.com. “Pardon Jailed Pastors Who Violated Coronavirus Protocols – Akufo-Addo Told.” Ghana Web, November 30, 2020. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Pardon-jailed-pastors-who-violated-coronavirus-protocols-Akufo-Addo-told-1121612/>.
- Abotchie, Chris. *Social Control in Traditional Southern Eweland of Ghana: Relevance for Modern Crime Prevention*. Vol. 10. Ghana Universities Press, Accra, 1997.
- Alex, Anzaku Sylvester, Ismaila Garba Adigizi, and Agube Solomon Aguye. “The Theoretical Exploration of Punishment and Incarceration in Nigeria?” 2015.
- Andersen, Synøve Nygaard, and Torbjørn Skardhamar. “Pick a Number: Mapping Recidivism Measures and Their Consequences.” *Crime & Delinquency* 63, no. 5 (2017): 613–35.

- Antwi, Alex. "Social Reintegration of Offenders and Recidivism in Ghana ." University of Ghana, 2015.
- Awolugutu, Abundant Robert K. "Decongesting Ghana's Prisons: Addressing The Alarming Issue of Overcrowding." GhanaWeb, 2025.
- Bellson, Frederick. " Assessing Human Rights Compliance in Ghana's Prisons: A Case Study of Awutu Camp Prison ." University of Education, 2020.
- Bernault, Florence, and Janet Roitman. "A History of Prison and Confinement in Africa," 2003.
- Boadu, Augustina Ama. " Implementation Challenges of Welfare Provisions for Prisoners in Nsawam Medium Security Prisons ." University of Ghana, 2014.
- Boateng, Christina, William Boateng, and Ronald Osei Mensah. "Reducing Recidivism through Vocational Skills Training in Selected Ghanaian Prisons." *African Quarterly Social Science Review* 2, no. 1 (2025): 70–81.
- Brunsdon, Alfred R, and Christopher Magezi. "Fostering Embrace, Inclusion and Integration of Migrants in Complex Migration Situations: A Perspective from Matthew 25: 31–46 and Hebrews 13: 1–2." *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76, no.2 (2020): 10.
- Darkwa, Baffour Frank. " Factors Contributing to Recidivism Among Inmates in the Nsawam Medium Security Prison ." University of Ghana, 2016.
- Dugger, Ashley, and Lilly Evie. "Prisons: History, Characteristics & Purpose." Study.com, 2025. <https://study.com/learn/lesson/prisons-history-characteristics-purpose.html>.
- Fair, Helen, and Roy Walmsley. "World Prison Population List." ICPR, 2024.
- Ferrara, Peter. "Retribution and Restitution: A Synthesis." *Journal of Libertarian Studies* 6, no. 2 (1982).
- Ghana Prisons Service. *HIV/TB Workplace Policy and Implementation Strategy*. Accra: Ghana Prisons Service, 2011.
- Glover, Christine, Jacob Obodai, James Mabery Forkuor, and Abena Korang Acheampong Abaitey. "Risk Factors of Recidivism: Lessons from Central Prison in Kumasi, Ghana," 2018.
- Klinge, Cecelia. "Measuring Change." *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology (1973-)* 109, no. 4 (2019): 769–817.
- Kwafo, Eric Nana Yaw. "Prison Conditions in Ghana Harden Criminals – Lawyer Kpebu." Modern Ghana, 2025.
- Mensah, Ronald Osei, and Sarah Gyamfua Akuoko. "Triggers to Repeated Criminal Behaviour in Ghana: An Analysis of the Nsawam Prison through a Case Study Approach." *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 10, no. 2 (December 19, 2023). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2023.2268394>.
- Mohammad Belayet. *Lectures on Criminology and Penology*. Chittagong, Bangladesh: Chittagong Independent University, 2019.
- Newman, Graeme. *The Punishment Response*. Routledge, 2017.
- Ntiamoah, Michael Kwadwo, and Elysium Orison Ameyibor. "Shrines and Social Order in Ghana: A Study of Duveh Shrine in Peki, Volta Region, Ghana." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 4, no. 2 (2023): 128–39.
- Ramesh, Kumar. "Criminology and Penology with Victimology." *Pedagogy* 1 (2025): 18.
- Samaha, Joel. *Criminal Justice*. Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2003.
- Shekarau, Reuben Luka, Ahumuza John Mary Vianney, and B Tucker. "The Evolution of the Prison System in Ghana, 1841-2007." *The Journal of Zaria Historical Research (ZAHIR)* 6, no. 1 (2022).
- Siddique, Ahmad. *Criminology and Penology*. 6th ed. Lucknow: Eastern Book Company, 2009.
- Skinner, Matthew L. "Remember My Chains: New Testament Perspectives on Incarceration." *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 72, no. 3 (July 12, 2018): 269–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964318766296>.
- Teye, James Tetteh. "Prisoner Social Reintegration in Ghana through Christian Social Support and Restorative Justice." University of Ghana, 2019.
- Thakur, Shailja. "The Concept of Punishment and Theories of Punishment." *International Journal of Advanced Research in Management and Social Sciences* 12, no. 10 (2023): 18.

- Woodruff. *Understanding Roots: A Brief History of Prisons*. Lexipo: Lexipol. Accessed July 17. Accessed July 16, 2026.
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1kfglpxSNaEDReSzINTR_aEsQ1wkABsqYY1EmDOsSloM/edit?tab=t.0.
- Yeboah, Patricia. "Non-Custodial Sentencing and Reduction of Overcrowding in Ghana Prisons: Case Study of Nsawam Male Prisons." 2023.
- Yire, Iddi. "GH¢180 Feeding Grant per Prison Inmate Is Woefully Inadequate – Muntaka." MSN News, 2025. <https://www.msn.com/en-xl/africa/ghana/gh-180-feeding-grant-per-prison-inmate-is-woefully-inadequate-muntaka/ar-AA1IEFAe/>.
- Yukhnenko, Denis, Leen Farouki, and Seena Fazel. "Criminal Recidivism Rates Globally: A 6-Year Systematic Review Update." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 88 (2023): 102115.

ABOUT AUTHORS

Samuel Boahen (MA) is a PhD candidate at All-Nations University, Koforidua (Ghana). He holds a Master of Arts in Ministry (Trinity Theological Seminary-Legon, Accra), Master of Arts in Christian Ministry in Management (Christian Service University-Kumasi), Post Graduate Certificate in Theology (Christian Service University-Kumasi); Post Graduate Diploma in Education (Valley View University-Techiman Campus) and BSc. Agricultural Engineering (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology-Kumasi). Boahen's research interest lies in African Christian Theology, Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology and Missiology. He has authored three peer-reviewed scholarly articles and co-authored seven additional articles published in reputable academic journals. He has also presented research papers at numerous academic conferences. In addition to his scholarly contributions, he serves as an ordained Reverend Minister of the Methodist Church Ghana, Sunyani Diocese.

Isaac Boaheng (PhD) holds doctorates from the University of the Free State and the University of Pretoria, both in South Africa. He is a Research Fellow at the Biblical and Religious Department of the University of the Free State. He lectures at Christian Service University and has over a hundred peer-reviewed publications. His research interests are in theology, Biblical studies, and Translation studies.