

## As Pensioners Demand 20 Per Cent COLA From Govt Over...

# ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

## Public Sector Workers Call For 60% Salary Increment



Ignatius Baffour Awuah, Minister of Employment & Labour Relations



Ken Ofori-Atta, Minister of Finance

Public sector workers have called for a 60 per cent increase in the base pay on the Single Spine Salary Structure (SSSS) for 2023 whereas the Public Services Pensioners Association

(PSPA) has also asked the Government to grant them at least a 20 per cent Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) to all pensioners. Base pay is the minimum

compensation earned by a worker in exchange for his or her labour and/or time before any taxes are applied or any form of benefit is awarded. Organised Labour, which made the proposal on behalf of public sector

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## Sahrawi Republic: Africa's Forgotten Colony In The Sahara page 8

### TUTAG Declares Indefinite Strike

After several weeks of notice to strike, the Technical University Teachers Association Ghana (TUTAG) over the weekend declared an indefinite strike. According to the Association, the strike action is in response to the inaction of the government to honour the Codified Conditions of Service of its members which it notes has been outstanding since 2016.

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### Family Health Medical School Excels Again

...As 54 Final Year Medical Students Complete Clerkship Rotation



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# The INSIGHT

## — EDITORIAL

### THE LOOMING DEBT CRISIS

**D**ata released by the Bank of Ghana recently indicated that Ghana's debt was now over \$40 billion, which is more than double what was bequeathed to this administration.

What is worrying about the country's rising debt level is that no stop-gap measures appears to be put in place to halt the phenomenon. Instead, borrowing appears to be the order of the day which has far-reaching repercussions for the nation in terms of its debt sustainability. Already, the unbridled government borrowing is giving many financial analysts headache since that appears to be the only leeway or succor in government raising needed capital for infrastructural projects.

Paradoxically, political watchers are worried that the present managers of the economy who in recent past complained about borrowing are themselves doing worse.

Reality of governance, has undoubtedly dawned, and it is important that a new paradigm shift is charted since the rate of borrowing is not sustainable in the long run.

The attempt by some official spokespersons to score political points using economic indicators which clearly do not make sense and also address the looming debt crisis because of their obvious contradictions and deficiencies is the most worrying.

The time to domesticate the economy to grow and eat what the country needs and quicken the industrial pace to lessen imports is now more than important to the nation's survival.

# TUTAG Declares Indefinite Strike

*from front page*

In a statement issued dated Friday, November 18, 2022, announcing the industrial action, TUTAG said it has so far received no response from relevant state agencies it has written to over their concerns.

"TUTAG views the inaction by these agencies as an indication that the concerns expressed in our letter have not been treated with the seriousness they deserve."

"In view of all these, and upon further deliberations by the National and Chapter Executives of TUTAG, we declare an indefinite strike action which takes immediate effect," the statement said.

According to the Association, the strike action is to take immediate effect.

**This is the full statement by TUTAG:**

Full statement by TUTAG

We refer to our letter on the subject "NEW RATE OF FUEL ALLOWANCE FOR MEMBERS OF UTAG AND TUTAG" with reference number TUTAG/GTEC/02 dated 26th September 2022, addressed to the Ghana Tertiary Education Commission (GTEC) and copied to the Minister of Education, Minister of Finance, Chairman of the National Labour Commission (NLC) and the Chief Executive Officer of the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission.

We wish to state that issues raised in the above letter have since not received any attention from the aforementioned government agencies. TUTAG views the inaction by these agencies as an indication that the concerns expressed in our letter have not been treated with the seriousness they deserve.

We also refer to the NLC's directive of 2nd September 2022 under the subject "RE: IN THE MATTER

OF NOTIFICATION OF INTENDED STRIKE ACTION BY TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION OF GHANA (TUTAG)" with reference number NLC/TUTAG/2022/21 which was in relation to TUTAG's demand for the implementation of the negotiated internally generated fund-related conditions of service.

The directive reads: "That the Minister of Finance (MOF) is hereby directed to ensure

payment in January 2023 and should also ensure that it issues the necessary letters to the various University Councils within a reasonable time to make budgetary provisions in the budget to take care of payments on the effective date.

Even though January 2023 is less than two months away, and most universities are done with budget preparations for 2023, the Minister of Finance has still not issued the letter as directed by the NLC. It is important to state that a certain letter (electronic version), supposedly written by the FWSC, was shown to the President at NLC, the content of the said letter was in sharp contrast with the negotiations done with the Governing Councils of the various universities. Indeed, our checks from the listed recipients indicate that the said defective letter had not even been received.

Further, reference is made to issues raised in our letter under the subject "NOTIFICATION OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION" with reference number TUTAG/NLC/02 dated 10th October 2022, some of which have still not been resolved by the government agencies.

In view of all these, and upon further deliberations by the National and Chapter Executives of TUTAG, we declare an indefinite strike action which takes immediate effect.

## THE INSIGHT

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# As Pensioners Demand 20 Per Cent COLA From Govt Over... ECONOMIC HARDSHIP Public Sector Workers Call For 60% Salary Increment

*from front page*

workers, cited the current rise in inflation and the 15 per cent Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) on the National Daily Minimum Wage as the basis for the increment.

It made the proposal for the consideration of the government through the Ministry of Employment and Labour Relations, and called on the Government to ensure that the step increment of 1.7 per cent on the Single Spine Salary Structure, as moved to two per cent in 2012 was implemented.

“Due to the inflationary trends and the fact that 15 per cent Cost of Living Allowance has been granted on the National Daily Minimum Wage. We humbly propose that a 60 per cent increase on the 2022 Base Pay should be considered,” it said. Organised Labour said it, “can no

longer wait for the implementation of the two per cent step increment”. It said originally, the daily base pay (Level 1, Step 1) was 10 per cent above the national daily minimum wage, but a gap had been created over the years because it accepted COLA instead of normal salary increase.

It said currently, the 2022 daily base pay on the 2022 Single Spine Salary Structure was 16.26 per cent below the 2022 national daily minimum wage and required a 10 per cent increment to GHS16.37 to close the existing gap.

Organised Labour, therefore, called for the 2022 annual base pay on the single spine salary structure of GHS3,672.84 to be increased to GHS5,303.23 for 2023 to halt the erosion in the salary levels for its members. The Government this week increased the national minimum

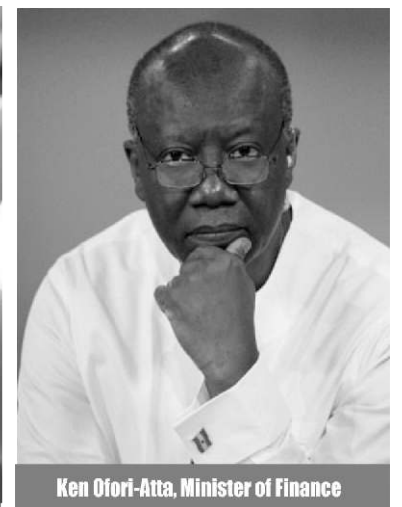
wage by 10 per cent, from GHS13. 53 to GHS14. 88. The implementation is expected to start January next year. A cross section of public sector workers expressed misgivings about the increment, describing it as woefully inadequate in view of the rising cost of living. Meanwhile, the National Executive of the Public Services Pensioners Association (PSPA) has also asked the Government to grant at least a 20 per cent Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) to all pensioners.

A statement signed by Mr W.K. Kemevor, Chairman of the Association and copied to the media said: “...Grant at least a 20 per cent COLA to all pensioners irrespective of the category they belong to; whether SSNIT or CAP 30,” because “We are dying prematurely”.

It said the PSPA was aware of the modicum relief of COLA granted public sector workers to cushion



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them against the current harsh economic conditions and believed pensioners also deserved such intervention. The statement said pensioners were suffering in silence and that the Government ought to act swiftly to rescue majority of them from “dying prematurely”, adding that: “Most of such older citizens do not earn GH¢ 500 per month”. It said the value of their meagre

pensions had been eroded by the harsh economic situation in the country and called for Government's intervention. “Pensioners also cough out the Ghana Cedi like anyone else and there is also the mounting medical bills pensioners have to pay due to age-related sicknesses,” the statement said. **Source-- GNA**

## Family Health Medical School Excels Again ...As 54 Final Year Medical Students Complete Clerkship Rotation



**F**ifty-four (54) final year students from Family Health Medical School have completed their mandatory District Clerkship Rotation across three regions in the country. The District Clerkship Rotation affords medical students hands-on practical experience in all specialties under the guidance of seasoned consultants and specialists. Additionally, the Clerkship introduces

the medical students to the types and management of medical problems seen in district hospitals. The students are required to examine patients, attend ward rounds, assist in the theater, laboratory and carrying out assignments as scheduled for them. Students also work with District Health Management Team (DHMT) to carry out health promotion and preventive programs, such as health education and promotion, communicable disease control and environmental sanitation. Also, during the Clerkship, the students familiarize themselves with the administrative set up of the health sector-from region down to the local level. The District Clerkship Rotation this year took the final year students to District/Municipal Hospitals and Christian Health Association of Ghana (CHAG) facilities in three regions of

Ghana. In the Central Region, students were stationed at St. Francis Xavier Hospital; Assin Fosu, St. Luke Catholic Hospital; Apam, Winneba and Agona Swedru Municipal hospitals.

In the Eastern Region, the students were stationed at Suhum and Nsawam Government Hospitals and the Volta River Authority Hospital in Akosombo. In the Volta Region, the students were at Keta Municipal Hospital, Battor Catholic Hospital and Richard Novati Catholic Hospital in Sogakope.

Selected final year students stationed within the Keta Municipality in collaboration with Keta Municipal Hospital and Anloga Health Directorate joined the Chiefs and people of Anlo State to celebrate this year's Hogbetsotso festival. The

medical students with health authorities pitched their tent at the festival grounds to provide free health screening and counseling to the residents and visitors to the festival and community.

Beneficiaries at the screening were taken through HIV testing and counselling, breasts screening and counseling, Blood Glucose Monitoring, Blood Pressure Testing and other health related screenings and counseling. In the Central Region, the students together with District Health Promotion Officers embarked on a media tour via Radio Peace, a community-based radio station to educate the community on Peptic ulcer disease, its causes, signs and symptoms and its prevention and

treatment. With high prevalence of teenage pregnancy in the Effutu Municipality, the students educated the adolescents on reproductive health related issues and the need to concentrate on their academics and channel their energies rightly. Family Health Medical School is Ghana's Premier Private Medical School which provides student-centered learning strategies that promote smart-learning among students.

The Medical School offers a six-year Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MB ChB) Programme for WASSCE and 'A' Level candidates, and a four and a half-year Graduate Entry Medical Programme (GEMP) for first degree holders in science-related disciplines.



# INTERNATIONAL NEWS REPORT

## Compiled By Peoples Dispatch

### UN Warns Of Increasing Food Insecurity In Sri Lanka

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) has warned that at least 5.7 million people or 26% of the population in Sri Lanka require humanitarian aid. The agency [added](#) that “without immediate humanitarian assistance, and ‘upstream’ interventions to address the fragility of systems, services and facilities, this number will multiply, and the consequences will deepen.” “96% of households in the survey overall have been affected by the current crisis,” the OCHA said, issuing its Needs Assessment Report for October 2022 released on November 3. The report highlighted the three main priority needs at the household level – food, health, and livelihood. Other major priorities include psychological well-being and the education of children, the report added.

On November 8, the UN team

and non-governmental organizations working jointly on the island nation under the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities (HNP) Plan [announced](#) the revision and extension of HNP targets. The revised plan will be extended to 3.4 million people in Sri Lanka till the end of 2022 and will require USD 70 million in addition to the USD 79 million that was raised through global appeal in June.

“Food insecurity in Sri Lanka has increased dramatically due to two consecutive seasons of poor harvests, foreign exchange shortages, and reduced household purchasing power.....Twenty-eight per cent of the population – or 6.3 million people – face moderate-to-severe acute food insecurity,” the UN Country Team in Sri Lanka stated.

Sri Lanka has been reeling from several months of economic crisis which has led to severe shortages of food and fuel. Nearly 32% of Sri Lankan households are currently food insecure, the World Food Programme (WFP) noted in its Household Food Security Survey for September 2022. Nearly 68% are turning to food-based coping strategies such as eating less preferred food, reducing the number of meals and limiting portion sizes.

Poverty rose from 13.1% to 25.6% between 2021 and 2022, according to the World Bank's 2022 Development Update. Meanwhile, food inflation in October hit 85.8%.

Sri Lanka's widespread economic crisis triggered mass anti-government protests this year, forcing the Gotabaya Rajapaksa regime to step down on grounds

of economic mismanagement. A [new government](#) came to power in July under the leadership of five-time Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. Protests have continued, however, as the island's 22 million population continues to face food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and increasing repression of [dissent](#).

#### Increasing insecurity, falling food production

Sri Lanka's food security problem has been compounded by a steep fall in food production which has spelled disaster for the [23.73%](#)(2020) of its population still dependent on agriculture. The OCHA's Needs Assessment Report acknowledged a “serious decline in domestic agricultural output brought on by an unsuccessful agricultural transition to organic farming has deepened the crisis.” In April 2021, the former government of Gotabaya Rajapaksa



A Sri Lankan tea farm. (Photo: via Wikimedia Commons) The UN team and non-governmental organizations working jointly on the island nation under the Humanitarian Needs and Priorities (HNP) Plan announced the revision and extension of HNP targets on November 8

imposed an all-out ban on importing chemical [fertilizers](#) into the country. Although it has been one year since the ban was revoked in November last year, agricultural productivity has suffered a severe blow with nearly 40 to 50% reduction in agricultural outputs for *Maha* and *Yala* seasons.

The production of tea, Sri Lanka's biggest export commodity, also fell by 18%. From January-September 2022, production hit a 26-year low at 192.37 million kilograms from 234.72 million kilograms last year, [reported](#) *Economy Next*.

### Rights Bodies Condemn Detention Of Women Activists In Afghanistan



(L to R) Humaira Yusuf, Farhat Popalzai, and Zarifa Yaqoobi. On November 3, Taliban authorities detained rights defender Zarifa Yaqoobi along with four of her male colleagues during a press conference in Kabul announcing the formation of the “Afghan Women Movement for Equality”

Rights bodies, including the United Nations and Amnesty International, have condemned the recent wave of detentions of female activists in Afghanistan. Amnesty called it “yet another attempt to quell all forms of peaceful protests and dissent in the country.”

On November 3, Taliban authorities

detained rights defender [Zarifa Yaqoobi](#) along with four of her male colleagues during a [press conference](#) in the Dasht-e Barchi area of Kabul. The press conference was announcing the formation of the “[Afghan Women Movement for Equality](#).” At least 60 Taliban officials entered the venue of the conference and later ensured that participants

deleted all photos and videos from their phones.

Jeremy Laurence, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, stated that they had received concerning reports from Kabul where “de facto security officials” had detained activists during a press conference by a women's civil society organization. “All Afghans have the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of expression and opinion, without fear of arrest or intimidation,” the statement [said](#).

On November 8, prominent female activist, 23-year-old [Farhat Popalzai](#), was arrested by the Taliban, [Jaama Press reported](#). She was among the founders of the Spontaneous Movement of Afghan Women, which has been campaigning for women's rights in the country after the Taliban

took over in August 2021. [Popalzai](#) was also in charge of the organization's social network. On November 13, another women's rights defender [Humaira Yusuf](#) was taken into [custody](#) by the Taliban government.

“We are further concerned about the safety and integrity of Zarifa Yaqoobi, Farhat Popalzai and Humaira Yusuf and their colleagues who have been detained. In the past, those arbitrarily detained under the Taliban have been tortured and otherwise ill-treated, many times denied access to legal remedies and family visits,” Samira Hamidi, Amnesty International's South Asia Campaigner, said. An earlier report titled [Death in Slow Motion: Women and Girls Under Taliban Rule](#) by Amnesty

International noted that women who peacefully protested against the Taliban's oppressive rules have been “threatened, arrested, detained, tortured, and forcibly disappeared.”

Taliban's spokesperson Zabiullah Mujahid alleged in a press conference on November 5 that activists “are being encouraged and [told to protest](#) and create distrust against the Islamic Emirate” by outside forces.

Since the Taliban toppled the Ashraf Ghani-led government in Afghanistan and assumed power last year, women have been at the [protesting](#) restrictions on their movement, education, and the failure to provide them security. Three female journalists were briefly detained by Taliban authorities on October 2 for covering an art exhibition by girls in west Kabul.

# Ghanaian Students On Scholarships To Morocco Increases From 45 To 90 Under Akufo Addo – Says Kingsley Agyemang



The Registrar, Ghana Scholarship Secretariat, Dr. Kingsley Agyemang has revealed that, under the current leadership of President Nana Akufo-Addo, the number of Ghanaian students allocated scholarships to study in Morocco has gone up from 45 to 90 each academic year with 20 specifically focused on TVET. He made this statement when he chaired the 10th Anniversary Honourary Ceremony of the Ghana Morocco Old Students Association (GHAMOSA) held at the British Council Hall in Accra. The theme for the occasion was, "Celebrating 10 years of Promoting Regional Integration Through Students Youth Diplomacy". The ceremony was to honour the vital role played by His Majesty King

Mohammed VI, King of the Kingdom of Morocco and Ghana's former President, His Excellency John Agyekum Kufuor who paved the way for many students from Ghana to further their education in Morocco in various fields of study including Healthcare, Engineering, Agricultural Science, Transport Management, Social Science among others. The theme he indicated, sought to recognise and celebrate personalities and institutions who had in diverse ways contributed to the solid relations between Ghana and Morocco academically. Dr. Agyemang also, reiterated the strong desire of the Ghana Scholarships Secretariat to continue to support Ghanaian students to develop the human capital of the country. He was impressed with how the Association, over the past ten years, has undertaken a number of very important activities like conferences, fora, exhibitions,

festivals and summits. With regards to how best to ensure the maximization of human capital of Ghanaian students who study in Morocco, Dr. Agyemang emphasised how CIMAF Ghana cement factory and OCP Group, producers of fertilizers, both Moroccan companies established in Ghana can use students who had the opportunity to train in Morocco as their first port of call when looking for labour. "This call was supported by Anas Sefriouim, owner of CIMAF cement, who expressed the readiness of the company to collaborate more with scholars from Ghana". He however, tasked Ghanaian students in other parts of the world to form unions among themselves in order to seek their collective interest. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, in a speech read on her behalf, also called for more South-South cooperation in order for countries to be collectively self-reliant and

attain internationally agreed development goals including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Moroccan Ambassador to Ghana, H.E Imane Quaadil, for her part assured her country's readiness to partner with Ghana in other areas of interest. She also praised Ghanaian students in Morocco for exhibiting good behaviour in the course of their studies. GHAMOSA President, Mr. Peter Panyin Anaman, commended the Ghana Government for heeding to the needs of not only students in Morocco, but other parts of the world with the assurance that the needful would be done to ensure that they become good citizens for Ghana wherever they find themselves. "I must use this opportunity to commend all former Ghana's Ambassadors to Morocco who have played key roles in ensuring a successful story today as far as GHAMOSA is concerned. Mention can be made of Amb. Kobina Annan

(former Ghana's Ambassador to Morocco 2002-2009), Amb. Clifford Kotey (Former Ghana's Ambassador to Morocco 2009-2013), Amb. Stephen M.D Yakubu (Ghana's Ambassador to Morocco 2013-2020), Amb. Jonathan Magnusen (Ghana's Ambassador to Niger and former Consul of the Embassy of Ghana, Morocco), the late Francis Kumah (former Ghana's Consul of the Embassy of Ghana), Mr. Amidu Mohammed Karande (Minister-Counsellor, Embassy of Ghana, Washington DC, USA & former Ghana's Consul of the Embassy of Ghana), Mr. Sharif Abdul Latif Yushawlatif (Ghana's Minister Counsellor, Embassy of Ghana, Niger & Former Consul of The Embassy Of Ghana) and Mr. Clarence K. H. Tamakloe, (former Ghana's Consul Officer to Morocco". Ghana Morocco Old Students Association (GHAMOSA) has over the years strengthened and promoted co-operation between Ghana and Morocco by contributing to national development and support for GHAMOSA members.

## Call Off Your Strike, Return To The Negotiation Table – FWSC To CETAG, CENTSAG

The Fair Wages and Salaries Commission (FWSC) has said it is not aware of any deductions from its office holding allowances paid to members of the Colleges of Education Association of Ghana (CETAG) and the Colleges of Education Teachers Association Non-Teaching Staff Association of Ghana (CENTSAG). "FWSC is not aware of any such deductions," it said in a statement. It however requested the leadership of the unions to "furnish" it with evidence to enable it "deal with the issue." The FWSC also addressed the issues raised by the unions. According to the FWSC, the government team began negotiations with CETAG on their conditions of service on "17 August 2022, where the rules of engagement were signed." The parties on "5 November 2021 agreed on all items presented by CETAG and were ready to sign an agreement."

CETAG however requested that two of the items Non-Basic allowance and Research Allowance be merged and sent a letter officially on "25 April 2022," asking for the merger. After receipt of the letter, the FWSC noted it took steps to

request for Mandate from the Ministry of Finance. "On 30 May 2022", CETAG shifted its position on the merger and rather asked for the "Approved research allowance for Academic Senior Members of Public Universities." Also, "on 3rd August CETAG submitted entirely new demands to the Government team for consideration which was a departure from all agreed items. The Government Team met with CETAG on 15 August 2022 to deliberate on their new demands. "Government Team and CETAG met on 28 August 2022 to conclude negotiations but CETAG was unwilling to accept the counter-proposals by the Government Team." It further disclosed that: "At the last engagement with CETAG on the 27 October, CETAG requested to go back and explain the status of negotiations to their constituents. It was therefore a surprise that they issued a joint Communique with CENTSAG threatening to embark on strike action if their demands are not met." It also indicated that it invited CETAG to a meeting on 10 November 2022 in order to bring finality to the matter, but CETAG and CENTSAG declined.

Again both associations declined another invitation to a meeting on 14 November 2022, The associations also declined a meeting with the Minister for Education Dr Yaw Aduwum on Tuesday, 15 November 2022. "These unforeseen delays occasioned by CETAG's continuous shift of positions have unduly stalled negotiations and the extension of CETAG's Conditions of Service to CENSTAG," the statement added. The two unions began an indefinite strike in all 46 colleges of education across the country over the government's failure to prioritise their welfare. The unions said they are disappointed at the non-finalisation of Conditions of Service (CoS) negotiations, the unilateral determination of April 2023 by the Fair Wages and Salaries Commission (FWSC) as the effective date for placing First Degree Holders of CENTSAG on 17TH on the SSSS, undue delay by the Ministry of Education in responding to requests for payment of compensation among others. They gave the government a five-day ultimatum last Monday to address their concerns or they strike. *Following the expiration of the deadline, CETAG and CENTSAG declared a strike on, Monday 14 November 2022 until their demands are met.*

## On Celebration Of 40th Birthday... Barima Sarpong Gives Back To Afigya Sekyere East Constituency

A leading member of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) who hails from the Sekyere East Constituency in the Ashanti Region, Richard Barima Sarpong, has provided free Health Insurance Registration for over one thousand people in the Constituency as he marked his 40th Birthday last Wednesday November 16. Barima Sarpong and his team divided the entire constituency into four zones in a two-day exercise which registered thousands of constituents onto the NHIS. Beneficiary communities included Bepose, Boanim, Kona, Afonamaso, Wiamose, Asamang, Agona and Jamasi as the selected centers. The massive registration exercise covered natives across different age categories amidst recent economic crisis, and the project was dubbed Barima@40 Free NHIS Registration. Mr. Barima Sarpong, who is heavily tipped to contest the upcoming NPP Primaries in the Constituency, has already carved a niche for himself on the political space. He is noted for his undiluted taste for



youthful empowerment and economic emancipation at the grass root level. Each registration center registered hundreds of beneficiaries for free as the son of the soil returns to give back to the society. Barima Sarpong holds Master's Degree in Development Communication and a Degree in Law on the educational journey. He was born and educated in a village called Dawu, a kilometer away from Jamasi where he attended Adu Gyamfi Senior High School and later University of Ghana.

His political ascension has been celebrated within the elephant family in the Ashanti Region and the country at large. He is expected to make an official bid for the 2023 Parliamentary Primaries of the New Patriotic Party.

# Sahrawi Republic: Africa's Forgotten Colony In The Sahara

By Pawel Wargan

Since 1975, thousands of Sahrawi people have lived in five refugee camps in the Algerian Sahara. They named these camps after [cities](#) in Western Sahara: Ausserd, Boujdour, Dakhla, Laayoune, and Smara. In a straight line, Smara the camp is some 400 kilometers from Smara the city. But a sand berm, [built](#) in the 1980s by Morocco, makes the distance unassailable. At 2,700 kilometers, the [berm](#) is the second-longest military fortification in the world, after the Great Wall of China. Reinforced with ditches and barbed wire fences, artillery and tanks, guarded outposts, and [millions](#) of land mines, the sand berm [partitions](#) Western Sahara—separating 80 percent of Western Sahara controlled by Morocco from the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic—which is [recognized](#) by the United Nations as the last “non-self-governing territory” in Africa. In 1991, MINURSO, the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, [announced](#) a plebiscite that would give the Sahrawi people a choice: independence or integration with Morocco. In April 1991, the Sahrawi people packed their belongings in boxes, choosing the former. Seeking access to Western Sahara's rich coastline, Spain first [seized](#) the territory after European colonizers [partitioned](#) Africa at the West African Conference of Berlin that took place from November 1884 to February 1885. By the 1970s, facing resistance from the Sahrawi people and increasing internal



Sahrawi camp. Photo: Pawel Wargan. Morocco and its international backers exploit the resource-rich Western Sahara as the Sahrawi people eke out an existence in refugee camps

pressures, the regime of Francisco Franco in Spain [agreed](#) to hold a referendum on independence, which [never took place](#). Spain eventually pulled out from Western Sahara. Meanwhile, to the south and the north, Mauritania and Morocco had set their sights on Western Sahara's resources. In November 1975, despite a judgment from the International Court of Justice [that](#) neither Mauritania nor Morocco had territorial sovereignty over the land, Morocco [sent](#) 25,000 troops and 350,000 settlers to Western Sahara. On November 14, Spain signed the tripartite [Madrid Accords](#) with Morocco and Mauritania, effectively ceding Western Sahara to its invaders. The Polisario Front, a national liberation movement formed in [1973](#) to oppose Spanish colonialism, now fought on two fronts. Supported by Algeria, it [defeated](#) the Mauritians in 1978. But Morocco retained its control over Western Sahara—with significant [backing](#) from Western powers, including the United States and members of NATO. At the Museum of Resistance in the camps, the Polisario [keeps](#) weapons of war captured during its struggle—tanks, airplanes, artillery, and

armored vehicles from Austria, Germany, France, Spain, the US, Belgium, and apartheid South Africa. Morocco controls 80 percent of Western Sahara. In the other 20 percent, the Polisario Front governs the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, a state battling for recognition. Armed conflict continued until Morocco and the Polisario agreed to a [ceasefire](#) in September 1991 overseen by MINURSO. “I was just coming back from Syria, a young graduate, having lived my entire life within this liberation process,” Oubi Bachir, a diplomat for the Polisario Front, told me. “I discovered not just hope, but jubilation. Finally, we were going home.” The Sahrawi people packed boxes to take their belongings back to Western Sahara. But as the boxes gathered dust, jubilation turned to frustration. The independence referendum has [failed](#) to take place—and the possibilities for armed struggle only reemerged when Morocco [broke](#) the ceasefire in 2020. The Sahrawi liberation movement, Bachir said, was “built on the armed struggle as the dominating pillar of action. That was taken away with no practical process in its place.”

## Imperialism in Western Sahara

Western Sahara is a rich land. It [has](#) some 72 percent of the world's phosphate

deposits, which are used to manufacture fertilizers. By the end of November 2021, Morocco [reported](#) revenues of \$6.45 billion from phosphates, an amount that increases each year. Western Sahara's fishing grounds [accounted](#) for 77.65 percent of Moroccan catches in 2018, representing the majority of its income from fishing that year. The European Union, too, operates a fleet in these waters. In 2018, a [judgment](#) of the Court of Justice of the EU struck down the 2000 Euro-Mediterranean Agreement between Morocco and the EU as “incompatible with the principles of self-determination.” But the EU [continues](#) to act in violation of the judgment, funding highly destructive fishing practices in the occupied territory. Scientists warn that overfishing in Western Sahara is rapidly [destroying](#) a critical biodiversity hotspot. Morocco and its international backers have their sights on two other resources abundant in the territory: wind and sunlight. In 2018, using German technology, the UK firm Windhoist [built](#) the 200 MW Aftissat wind farm in Western Sahara. Vigeo Eiris, a UK-French company that has been “investigating companies operating in occupied Palestine,” [certified](#) Moroccan energy investments on Sahrawi land. General Electric [signed](#) a contract to build a 200 MW wind farm in Western Sahara. [Greenwashing](#) its occupation in Western Sahara, Morocco uses the infrastructure in reporting toward its climate targets. Western Sahara Resource Watch [estimates](#) that the wind power plants in the territory could account for 47.2 percent of Morocco's wind capacity and up to 32.64 percent of its solar capacity by 2030.

## The people bloom

“We call this the desert within the desert,” Mohamed El Mamun, a Polisario Front representative, told me on a drive between two camps. The sand is so salty, the water so scarce, that few things can grow. Yet in the five decades since the five camps have existed, the Sahrawi people have made great strides toward building a dignified society in them. They eliminated illiteracy. They built universal education and the infrastructure to extract and distribute water to the people. Mass movements ensure the participation of women, workers, and the youth in the project of liberation. Health care is free, and a small experiment in aquaponic farming promises to grow food in one of the most arid places on Earth. The camps depend [almost entirely](#) on foreign aid, a resource that is rapidly depleting. As of November 10, 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Algeria mission, a key source of humanitarian assistance to the Sahrawis, was only [39 percent funded](#). The UN has [warned](#) that the Russian-Ukrainian conflict risks further eroding that support. Here, socialist internationalism plays an important role. In the Smara camp, Venezuela and Cuba [built](#) a school. The Simón Bolívar School is staffed by Cuban teachers. More than 100 Sahrawis have graduated from the school since it opened in 2011. Some of the alumni went on to study in Cuba, returning as doctors, engineers, and teachers. Nearby, a man who calls himself Castro established the Center for Education and Integration, which prepares children with severe disabilities to live a dignified life. Above its entrance, a sign reads: “Neither plants nor trees grow here, but people bloom.”

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traditional fiscal operations; and

ii. They are largely bonds and capturing them above the line will imply recognizing their payments now and recognizing their payments again when the payments fall due in the future – a possible double counting. A method that the proponent is or ought to have been very much familiar with from his years as Deputy Minister of Finance. i. They are debts of SOEs that have been assumed by Government and are largely contingent liabilities that have crystallised for payments; and ii. They are extraordinary, one-off payments which need not be mixed up with traditional expenditure items. Something, again, which the proponent should be very familiar with. I. the Finsec bailout exercise is largely completed and, therefore, ceases to be an extraordinary budget item; and ii. IPPs payments are expected to be made over the medium-term. Given that they have become explicit contingent liabilities, appropriately budgeting for them "above the line" ensures that resources are duly allocated for their settlement. 35. Likewise, the Energy sector IPP payments were reflected in the fiscal framework as part of the Amortisation line under the Financing part of the fiscal table for the following reasons: 36. **However, the MoF** agreed with the Finance Committee of Parliament in 2021 that going forward from 2022 onwards, both the Energy IPP payments and the Finsec Payments will be treated "above the line" in the fiscal framework for the following reasons: 37. The 2022 Budget, therefore, reflects this decision. Neither the Ministry, nor I have deliberately or dishonestly misreported economic data to Parliament. 38. This is buttressed by the submissions made in May 2020 by the IMF Country Director, Dr Albert Touna Mama: **"Our number includes these two elements (financial sector payments and energy sector payment) and we know why the Governor of Bank of Ghana made the decision not to have these two elements in the fiscal deficits."** There is also a claim on **"Fiscal recklessness leading to the crash of the Ghana Cedi which is currently the worst performing currency in the world", I will respond as follows:** 39. Hon. Co-Chairs, the grounds of recklessness presuppose that I have not been guided by the

laid-down regulations. I want to state that I have not been reckless in the management of the FISCAL Operations of Government. Rather, our strenuous efforts to protect the public purse is what has helped this government to have achieved much, much more than any government over a similar period in virtually all sectors, including education, health, social welfare, policing, security in general, roads, railways, agriculture, industrialisation, tourism, digitization, and funding for anti-corruption institutions<sup>40</sup>. Hon. Co-Chairs, I have come to Parliament House ten (10) times (eleven times since this Government) in the last 6 years to present the Annual and Mid-Year Budgets. On all occasions, I have discussed all proposed fiscal operations of Government (revenues, expenditures and financing). 41. On all those occasions, I received approval as Parliament subsequently passed Appropriations Bills for all those Budgets. Every key expenditure made has been supported by this House. Indeed, we all saw the dire consequences when the House, for months, refused to pass a major revenue generation item introduced by this Government to support the fiscal stability of the economy. Sadly, the Minority Leader, when this government was compelled to approach the Fund this year, triumphantly took credit for frustrating government's efforts to meet its half-year revenue targets. "He told the Parliamentary Press Corps last June that, "Thanks to the opposition Government has already lost half-year revenue. That can only be attributed to the purpose and tenacity of the Minority Group in Parliament." 42. The consequences of this intentional stance have been dire. It precipitated a lack of confidence in the international market and closed access to Ghana's traditional Eurobond issuance. 43. Hon. Co-Chairs, it is worthwhile to note that indeed, the Proponents offered only one item as not having been approved by Parliament for Payment –The National Cathedral of Ghana, and I have shown that to be untrue. 44. I would hope we can take it that by extension of their proposition, they accept that all other expenditures have been approved by Parliament. 45. We must all boldly share in the positive

achievements regularly reported by the Bank of Ghana in its quarterly 'Fiscal Development Reports' for the years 2017-2021. 46. Hon. Co-Chairs, it cannot be sustained that I have been reckless in supporting the implementation of the decisions of Parliament.

## FUNDING ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

47. Hon Co-Chairs, with the approval of funds by Parliament in the last 6 years, we have undertaken major transformative investments to improve the quality of life of Ghanaians: I. We have mobilised and invested in excess of **GH¢28.3 billion (as at Sept, 2022)** to implement transformative Flagship Programs that improve social mobility and the quality of life of Ghanaians; (most of these did not exist prior to 2017); this include:

- a) Supporting 1,765,977 Ghanaian students under Free SHS/TVET to promote human Capital Development and social mobility.
- b) Enrolling 15,656,160 Ghanaians aged 15years and above on the National Identification Programme by Sept, 2021 to enhance security and economic efficiency.
- c) support about 100,000 Young graduates to enter the job market.
- d) Providing needed infrastructure to support decentralization and local governance to expand access to public services under the Regional Re-organisation programme.
- e) Promoting the development of railway network to advance national and regional connectivity
- f) Supporting the on-going construction of fishing harbours to service key coastal communities including Axim, Dixcove, Moree, Mumford, Winneba, Senya Bereku, Gomoa Fete, Teshie and James Town.
- g) Increasing School Feeding beneficiaries from 1,677,322 in 2016 to 3,300,000 pupils in 2021.
- h) Increasing LEAP beneficiaries from 195,860 households in 2017 to 344,023 in 2021 to improve the livelihoods of for the underprivileged in our society.

i) Increasing food production and security through Planting for Food and Jobs. It has led to a 71% increase in the national production of maize and 34% in paddy rice.

ii. We have invested significantly in retooling the security sector to maintain territorial integrity and improve internal security (CCTV, motor bicycles, vehicles, Forward Operating Bases, recruitment of security personnel etc);

i iii. We have recruited over 200,000 Ghanaians into crucial service areas such as Education, Health, Security and Local Government; and

i iv. Established a Tree Crop Development Authority with a focus on mango, cashew, rubber, oil palm, shea and coconut, in order to diversify our economy and provide raw materials for industrialisation.

48. These and many more we have done.

## ON THE ISSUE OF FISCAL RECKLESSNESS AND DEPRECIATING CEDI

49. Hon. Co-Chairs, the idea that the depreciation of the Cedi is the result of fiscal recklessness is not supported by the available facts. 50. The Ghana Cedi consistently performed very well throughout my tenure as Finance Minister, up until March 2022. The records show that between 2012 and 2016, the Cedi depreciated by an average of 17% whilst between 2017 and 2021, the average rate of depreciation was 7%.

51. The major contributors to the currency problem are not necessarily fiscal factors Hon. Co-Chairs, unlike July 2014 when the Cedi was last rated as the world's worst performing currency, the 2022 depreciation is largely attributed to extraordinary global factors including the strengthening of the US Dollar (even against major international currencies like the UK Pound and the Euro); and speculation due to economic uncertainties. For example, in this year, 2022, the Euro is worth less than the dollar for the first time in 20 years.

52. As stipulated in Article 183 of the Constitution, Section 2(a). The Bank of Ghana shall promote and maintain the stability of the currency of Ghana and direct and regulate the currency system in

the interest of the economic progress of Ghana. As such, the Bank of Ghana, which manages our reserves is leading the interventions to contain the depreciation of the Cedi.

53. Government, on its part, is undertaking real sector interventions through initiatives such as 1D1F and the Ghana CARES programme, to accelerate the import substitution of products such as poultry and rice, and promote an export led economy thereby reducing foreign exchange pressures from the imports of those products. 54. We intend to announce additional measures to promote the consumption of local produce. Furthermore, the implementation of the AfCFTA positions Ghana as a continental trade hub, and we shall take advantage and boost the export orientation of our industries. 55. The Ministry of Finance has also arranged significant financing including the US\$750 million from Afrexim Bank to support the 2022 Budget and boost our foreign exchange reserves. This forex inflow has improved the supply of foreign currency and boosted the stability of the local currency. We continue to explore avenues to secure additional financing to boost the reserve position. **On the issue of "Alarming incompetence and frightening ineptitude resulting in the collapse of the Ghanaian economy and an excruciating cost of living crisis" I state as follows:** 56. Hon Co-Chairs, these are very strong language. The choice of words for this part of the motion is worrying, especially as it relates to the functioning of the whole national economy. The truth is, considerable progress has been made under my tenure as Minister for Finance. Since 2017, we have competently managed the economy. 57. Hon. Co-Chairs, we have competently managed the economy since 2017. Indeed, to appreciate where we are now, we need to look back at where we came from. At the close of 2016, an assessment of the Economy revealed: i. limited fiscal space (fiscal deficit 6.5%); ii. a distressed financial sector (NPL ratio-17.3%); iii. an asset quality review document which had not been released; iv. a derailed IMF-ECF programme and reduced economic output (GDP growth-3.4%); v. Inflation was 15.4% at the end of 2016; vi. Monetary Policy rate (interest rate) was 25.5% at the end of December 2016; vii. Limited CAPEX to MDAs; and viii. 'Dumsor' which had decimated local

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58. Hon. Co-Chairs, it is important to note that through our leadership and commitment to turn around the economy from its state in 2016, we made great strides and remarkable progress in the years before the pandemic and the records attest to this.

59. The headline facts are: i. We doubled economic growth in our first three years, and Ghana's growth in 2019 was touted as one of the highest globally; ii. Inflation came down significantly from 15.4% to 7.9% at the end of 2019 and remained in single digits till the pandemic hit in March 2020; iii. The fiscal deficit which was about 6.5% was brought down to under 5 percent by the end of 2019; iv. Exchange rate depreciation reduced significantly to under [5 percent] in 2017 and averaging [8.7 percent] between 2017 and 2019; v. We reduced interest rates in line with declining inflation expectations. Monetary Policy Rate declined from 25.5% at the end of December 2016 to 16% at the end of 2019 while the average lending rate for the same period declined from 31.70% to 23.7%; vi. The government directly spent GH¢25 billion to save the banking and SDI sector, protecting the near collapse of the financial sector; saving close to 5,400 direct jobs and 12,000 indirect jobs; making sure 4.6 million depositors were protected; and vii. Government also implemented comprehensive reforms across the energy sector and kept the lights on to-date.

60. On the back of good economic management, in April 2019, Ghana successfully completed and exited the IMF-ECF programme that we inherited. To ensure irreversibility of the macroeconomic gains, Government introduced a number of measures including: i. passage of the Fiscal Responsibility Act, 2018 (Act 982) to cap the fiscal deficit at 5% of GDP and ensure maintenance of positive primary balance; ii. passage of the Public Financial Management Regulations, 2019 (LI 2378) to strengthen regulation of the Public Financial Management System; and iii. establishment of the two Social Partnership Programmes with Labour and Faith-Based Organisations.

61. Clearly, there was strong momentum and optimism towards Ghana Beyond Aid agenda at the end of 2019.

62. However, with the onset of the pandemic, the gains from over three years of fiscal rectitude were reversed as result of efforts to ensure lives and livelihoods were protected.

63. Ultimately, these considerations informed the raft of revenue and expenditure measures outlined in the 2022 Budget Statement. 64. We laid out the 2022 Budget to achieve Fiscal Consolidation anchored on debt sustainability. It is important at this point, to also highlight that a key component of the national debt stock related to three (3) exceptional expenditure items that are neither external nor a creation of this Government: i. Energy Sector Excess Capacity payments (GH¢ 17 billion), which relate to a legacy of take or pay contracts that saddled the country's economy with annual excess capacity charges of close to US\$1 billion; ii. Direct COVID-19 expenditure amounted to GH¢ 12.0 billion; and iii. the Banking Sector Clean up (GH¢ 25 billion).

65. These three items alone, contribute to about 23% of our annual debt servicing cost. These three items were not created through the recklessness of the New Patriotic Party. The long dumsor that Ghanaians endured under the NDC administration between 2012 and 2016 was more to do with the NDC government's inability to pay for power. So, Co-Chairs, I find it curious that Hon. Ato Forson will choose to cite energy bills as an example of the recklessness that the Minority charges me with and seek my removal by censure. Especially when we have had to pay around \$500 million dollars a year in excess capacity charges, for power the previous administration negotiated that we do not need and we do not use.

66. Hon Co-Chairs, in actual fact, we have been able to renegotiate some of these power purchase agreements and the new agreements with the Priority IPPs, once finalized and executed will offer estimated nominal savings of more than USD 4 billion over the next 5 years.

67. We have also used a significant part of the borrowing to undertake key transformative investments such as:

i. the fixing constructing of over eleven thousand, five hundred (11,500) kilometres of new roads

between 2017 and 2021;

ii. The construction of 12 major interchanges since 2017 as compared to 5 interchanges in the previous 8 years.

iii. the construction of the Eastern Regional and Central Gonja Hospitals;

iv. Commencing work on eighty-seven (87) of the Agenda 111 projects;

v. funding on-going airport projects, including the Kumasi International Airport; and vi. promoting the establishment of the Development Bank Ghana to provide competitive finance for Ghanaian Entrepreneurs.

68. Indeed, the E-Levy was borne out of this heightened need to mobilize resources sufficient for managing the pre-eminent

challenges of our time: fiscal consolidation, debt sustainability, and reducing youth unemployment.

69. Unfortunately, the delay in the passage of the E-levy adversely impacted market confidence and largely contributed to the downgrade in Ghana's sovereign credit ratings in January 2022 and these resulted to a whole deterioration of the financial conditions for Ghana and closed Ghana's access to the international capital markets (ICM) due to Deteriorated perception and loss of confidence by investors.

70. For this reason, access to ICM funds was no longer available which resulted in a severe BOP problem that needs to be addressed.

71. The Government thus resorted to the IMF as a lender of last resort to not only address the immediate and active BOP need but also to protect all the macro and social policy gains made in the last 5 years.

72. Undoubtedly, the last few months have seen considerable economic uncertainty and challenges. These have been characterized by high of inflation levels and rapid depreciation of the cedi. Indeed, the economic challenges we are facing require deliberate but urgent, well thought out, strategic steps as well as the support of the Ghanaian people.

73. The above notwithstanding, there are still some bright spots.

74. Overall, our growth outturn of 3.4% and 4.8% in Q1 and Q2 2022 respectively, coupled with modest

improvements in our fiscal position suggests our economy is gradually on the upswing despite the numerous shocks we have faced over the past two years.

75. This progress gives us a solid foundation to confront the challenges in front of us.

76. Undoubtedly, risks remain that we are highly attuned to; however, the Ministry of Finance is committed to working alongside all stakeholders, including the members of Parliament to ensure we can reposition our economy back on a path of growth and prosperity.

**There is a claim of "Gross mismanagement of the Ghanaian economy, which has occasioned untold and unprecedented hardship". I want to re-state that:**

77. Hon Co-Chairs, the current economic challenges we are experiencing in Ghana is not the outcome of mismanagement. But we acknowledge the hardships our people are going through in these difficult times.

78. This assessment is wholly shared by objective observers. In the recent words of the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), **Kristalina Georgieva** and I quote: *"to the people of Ghana, like everybody else on this planet, you have been hurt by exogenous shocks. First the Pandemic, then Russia's War in Ukraine and what we need to realise is not because of bad policies in the country but because of these combination of shocks..."*

79. I have already discussed the domestic triggers behind the depreciating Cedi. We simply cannot overlook the significant impact of the delayed passage of the revenue measures outlined in the 2022 Budget, which resulted in negative market reactions, credit rating downgrades, the narrowing of financing sources, and the eventual depreciation of the cedi. The timelines are obvious and cannot be ignored.

**Going Forward**

80. Hon. Co-Chairs, it is time to have an honest national conversation on the patterns of expenditure as a people. Our preference for imported goods, which requires foreign exchange that we do not earn enough of, implies that our cedi will continue to be under pressure

81. It has become clear that we cannot continue in a business-as-usual mode. We have to significantly change our consumption

patterns and support investments in local capacity for production and export.

82. Hon. Co-Chairs, even in these challenging times, we have not been rudderless. We have prepared the Post-COVID-19 Programme for Economic Growth (PC-PEG) as the domestic blueprint, which has benefitted from input from all key stakeholders including Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), social partners (labour unions, employers, and FBOs), academia, industry professionals, and the leadership of Parliament.

83. This document contains a set of time-bound structural reforms and fiscal consolidation measures to place our debt levels and fiscal accounts on a sustainable path over the medium-term, and has underpinned Government's engagement with the IMF.

84. The negotiation with the IMF is progressing steadily and well and we are working assiduously to achieve a Staff-Level Agreement (SLA) by end of December, 2022.

85. As the President announced recently, Government is aggressively pursuing initiatives that will structurally boost the export orientation of this economy. In the coming 2023 Budget, and following consultations with key stakeholders, including AGI, Labour and the trading community, we expect to announce critical measures in this regard. This will complement that on-going private sector-led interventions being promoted under the 1D1F and the GhanaCARES programme.

86. However, the world had no playbook to help us tackle the Covid-19 pandemic. Parts of the Ghanaian economy were shut-down, including hotels, restaurants, and events. Our efforts were further destabilised by the disturbances in the global supply chain. But even in those times, we provided electricity and water free, grants and loans to businesses in the formal and in formal sectors. We also paid our workers even when some were home for 9 months and did not lay off anyone.

87. No country has been saved from the disruptions in supply chains, record hikes in prices of energy, food and commodities. Every economy is facing macro-fiscal challenges, rises in public debt levels and narrowing fiscal space. Our situation was not helped by a combination of historic weaknesses in the structure of our import-dependent economy and our low capacity, even as compared to our neighbours, in raising domestic revenues. The 2023 Budget will contain policies directly aimed at tackling these vulnerabilities.